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GREYHAWK'S EXAG: CITY OF CLAY

DUNGEON

ISSUE 145 · APRIL 2007

MONSTERS WALK THE STREETS!

THE SEEDS OF SEHAN CAMPAIGN ARC BEGINS

FIGHT THE DEMON LORD OF THE ISLE OF DREAD!

ALL-NEW DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ADVENTURES FEATURING:

GNOLLS › SKINWALKERS › GIANT FIENDISH OYSTERS

WOLFGANG BAUR'S DUNGEONCRAFT › DOWNER › MT. ZOGON

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"A dozen times that day was my life threatened by fearsome creatures of the earth or sky, though I could not but note that the farther north I traveled, the fewer were the great dinosaurs, though they still persisted in lesser numbers. On the other hand the quantity of ruminants and the variety and frequency of carnivorous animals increased. Each square mile of Caspak harbored its terrors."

Edgar Rice Burroughs
"The Land that Time Forgot"

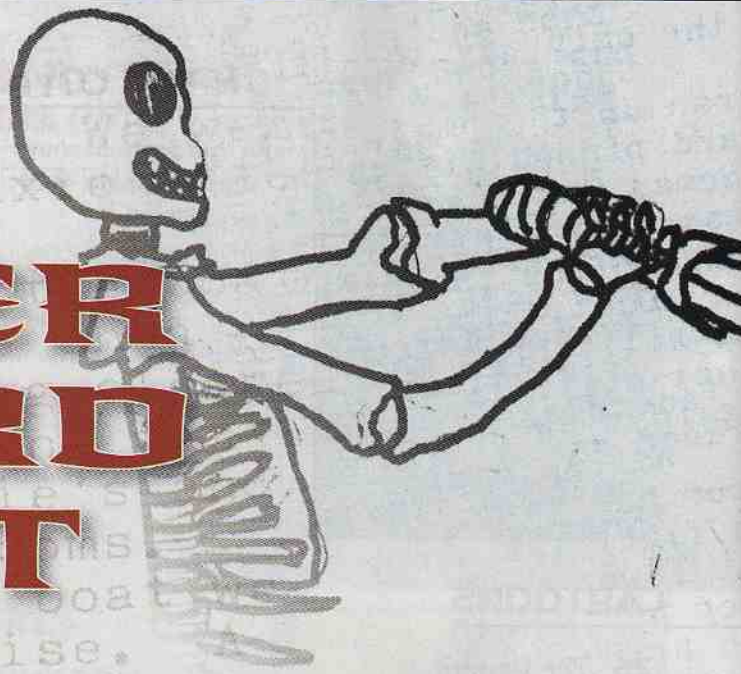
DUNGEON ADVENTURE PLAYER REWARDS!

Take advantage of the RPGA's Player Rewards program by scoring points with the adventures from this issue of *Dungeon*! Each adventure is worth 2 D&D Player Rewards points, and remains active until 5/31/07.

RPGA NETWORK

Drop by rpga.com for more details, and use the following adventure codes:

The Distraction (145DI1DN)
Vile Addiction (145VI1DN)
City of Broken Idols (145BI1DN)



POWER SWORD QUEST

Once upon a time, I didn't know about Dungeons & Dragons. I have my fifth-grade teacher, Spencer Brooks, to thank for rectifying that severe character flaw.

You see, Mr. Brooks had an ingenious plan. One rainy day when lunch recess ended up occurring in the classroom, he produced a thin blue book with a dragon on the cover, and told us about King Skoorb and his missing *Power Sword*. By the end of the week, Mr. Brooks had split my class into five groups of five, and we'd all created characters to venture into the dungeon below King Skoorb's castle. He ran each group through the dungeon one encounter at a time, pitting us not only against the worst that blue book had to offer, but against each other. All five groups were to explore the dungeon simultaneously, and since there was only one *Power Sword* to be found, only one group would be the victor.

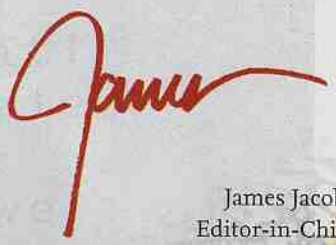
That was the ingenious part of the plan. After a group navigated a lunchtime encounter with giant ants or the Jabberwock or displacer beasts, one of the players in that group had to write up the encounter as a short story before Mr. Brooks would run the next encounter. If no one wrote it, the other groups would draw closer to being the first to recover the sword while your group languished in the Forest of Silence or on the crab-infested shores of the nixie's isle. Turns out, it's a brilliant way to trick a bunch of 5th-grade kids into writing.

Fortunately for my group, I already enjoyed writing, and had developed a callus on my middle finger where my pencil rested while I wrote (a callus I still have today). I ended up writing 14 of the 15 chapters that ended up being printed by the school press as *Power Sword Quest*. It even included awesome artwork (some of which, such as the skeleton pictured above, was by yours truly). As a result, I have a permanent record of Jacobs trivia, such as the first monster one of my PCs ever defeated (a giant crab), the first dragon I ever encountered (a gold dragon), the first time I found a *vorpal sword* (it was stuck in a tree in the Jabberwock's forest, of course), and the first time I ran afoul of D&D's merciless-across-all-editions-rules for swimming in armor (I got pushed into a castle moat by an animated giant skull).

I'm still writing campaign journals for the games I play in today. I've traded in my #2 pencil for a computer keyboard, and the rules of the game have gone through several edition changes, but the value of the campaign journal remains unchanged. Writing a campaign journal allows me to develop my character's personality in a much more controlled fashion than in game. It helps me keep complex plotlines understandable, and when handed out to the other players, takes some of the pressure off the DM at the start of a session so that he doesn't have to recap what's come before. Starting a new game session by reading the previous session's journal entry aloud is a great way to get everyone back into the events of the game, and when the campaign's over, you have yourself a nifty little bit of fiction to serve as a memento.

And now, with the internet doing its thing, the next evolution of the campaign journal is here—now you can share your party's experiences with the world! It's certainly great fun to read campaign journals of the various Dungeon Adventure Paths, and in some cases those fan-written journals have even served as valuable market research, showing us how we can build better Adventure Paths with each new entry. Even the journal of my own Age of Worms character Tyralandi has gained a small bit of fame here on the Paizo messageboards.

It's strange what you learn in school that actually ends up being useful, isn't it? Thanks for everything, Mr. Brooks!



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DUNGEON #142

THE SAVAGE TIDE REACHES THE ISLE OF DREAD!
DUNGEON
RETURN TO THE LOST CITY
RAID THE VAULT OF THE MOUNTAIN KING
CULTISTS OF ZARGON • UNDEAD DWARVES • TERROR BIRDS
THE ISLE OF DREAD • DOWNER • MT. ZOGON

Zargon Lives!

Back in the early days of D&D, the fourth adventure in the Basic series introduced the lost city of Cynidicea, the immense dungeon that served as its entrance, and the monstrous beast that dwelt in its deepest recesses—Zargon!

Our first adventure in issue #142 built upon that old classic. B. Matthew Conklin III's "Masque of Dreams" actually works quite well as an introduction to *The Lost City*, setting the stage for what could be developed into an exciting campaign beneath the desert sands of the Valley of Death.

At the other end of the level scale, Caine Chandler's "Bright Mountain King" brought us that rarest of villains, a druid who isn't encountered at the heart of a forest.

And we mustn't forget Jason Bulmahn's entry into the Savage Tide Adventure Path. "Here There Be Monsters" has already gained a reputation as a meatgrinder in the office—here's hoping that some of the PCs in your group can cure mummy rot!

Back issues of *Dungeon* #141 are available at paizo.com.

Prison Mail

Zargon's Evil Twin?

I want to start by saying that issue #142 was excellent! I loved "Masque of Dreams." The creativeness of that adventure is just astounding. I read *Dungeon* cover to cover, and when I read that adventure, I actually laughed. It's great that you threw in such a great low-level adventure since I recently started DMing. I was curious if you knew about the coincidence of the evil god in "Masque of Dreams" being called Zargon and the Milton Bradley game Heroquest having a similar villain? In Heroquest (a role-playing board game) the "DM player" is called Zargon and plays an evil wizard. Heroquest came out in 1991 (I think—I've been wrong before...), and this adventure was obviously published after that, so was the name of the evil god taken from that game? Alright, now that I've finished interrogating you, I'll just end by telling you guys to keep up the great work!

Duncan Prettyman
Via Email

Zargon's actually one of the oldest (and most fondly rememberd) D&D villains. His first appearance was in the old basic set adventure, B4: The Lost City, *which was published about 10 years before Heroquest, so if anyone's "borrowing" names, I'm afraid it's Heroquest, not D&D. Although to be fair, in the original UK release of Heroquest, the evil wizard was named Morcar. I'm not sure why the name changed in the US release, but I bet some of the folks who handled the US version of Heroquest were fans of* The Lost City *as well. Maybe one of them had their fighter eaten by Zargon?*

In his original incarnation in The Lost City, *Zargon's by no means anything as mundane as an evil wizard. He's all slime and tentacles and horns. He's not quite a god, nor is he quite a demon lord. He did, however, manage to capture the attention of many D&D players, such that his fame remains relatively strong today in old-school gamer circles.*

Statistics for Zargon appeared back in issue #315 of Dragon magazine, and judging by the amount of "Oh boy! ZARGON!" mail we received (of which this and the next letter are great examples), third edition has far from seen the last of this particular horned monster.

Desperately Seeking Zargon

The first thing I do when I receive my latest issue of *Dungeon* magazine is find out what's in store for the next issue. Imagine my delight upon opening issue #141 and reading that there was an upcoming adventure set in the Lost City with Zargon cultists! I couldn't wait. In one more month I would be delving the depths of the Cynidicean's step pyramid and thwarting evil Zargonites. Or so I thought. Twenty-odd years ago, I explored the last refuge of the Cynidiceans and found it to be one of the best adventures of the time. I envisioned a whole new adventure,

NEXT MONTH IN DUNGEON

ESCAPE FROM MEENLOCK PRISON

BY TIM AND EILEEN CONNORS

What was supposed to be a simple prisoner transfer grows complicated when the PCs arrive at a prison that's recently come under new management. A D&D adventure for 1st-level characters.

SPAWN OF SEHAN

BY STEFAN HAPP, STEPHEN S. GREER, B. MATTHEW CONKLIN III, TOM GANZ, AND ASHAVAN DOYON

The Seeds of Sehan Campaign Arc continues with the heroes closing in on the source of a dangerous drug that turns its victims into monstrous mutants. A D&D adventure for 9th-level characters.

SERPENTS OF SCUTTLECOVE

BY RICHARD PETT

The *Sea Wyvern* sets sail for a city whose streets are more savage than the darkest jungle of the Isle of Dread. A Savage Tide Adventure Path scenario for 15th-level characters.

BACKDROP: SCUTTLECOVE

BY JAMES JACOBS

Home to murderous pirates, decadent druglords, merciless slavers, cannibalistic monks, and worse, the vile streets of Scuttlecove wait to claim their newest victims as the Savage Tide enters its final stage.

with updated maps and all sorts of new creatures and NPC's. But alas, when I received issue #142, I found that there was no Lost City and the fabled step pyramid was a lifeless stone lump. With all the action taking place outside, I dejectedly turned the pages and thought about what might have been. Whatever glories there were to be found in a 3.5 version of the Lost City still elude me. Shame on you. As I see it, you owe me one Lost City adventure full of Cynidiceans and Zargonites... INSIDE the pyramid. Maybe I'll even try to write it myself, but I would rather you talented folks take care of that for me. But one disappointment in a year-long subscription I can handle.

On a side note, the Savage Tide Adventure Path is shaping up to be one of the greatest D&D campaigns of all time. I thought Age of Worms was very good (which, by the way, you can thank for my subscription), but Savage Tide is even better. Whatever you guys are doing, keep it up. The top quality that was heralded with the arrival of Erik Mona continues under James. Even with the Lost City debacle, you guys have something to be proud of, and DRAGON too. Keep the great adventures coming!

William Lawler
Via Email

A close inspection of the preview text in issue #141 reveals that we never actually promised an updated version of B4: The Lost City, *but I can understand your disappointment. Trust me, I would have loved to update all of that excellent adventure, but keep in mind the fact that a 3.5 adventure averages 500 words an encounter. Using that estimate, a full update of this module would have required about 29,000 words, resulting in an adventure the length of the longest of our Adventure Path installments. And that'd only cover the half of the dungeon that was fully detailed in the original adventure! Add in the second half of the dungeon, and the word count rises to 50,000. All that before even saying a peep about the Lost City of Cynidicea itself, which could easily double that word count. At 850 words a page, that makes for a 118-page adventure (and that's before art and maps). Hard to pull off in a 98-page magazine.*

SETTING ALIGHT THE GRAIL-SHAPED BEACON

Paizo Publishing, in association with Spamalot: the Musical, brings you a giveaway of Pythonesque proportions. Five grails (see below) have been concealed in both April issues of DRAGON and DUNGEON. All of the grails look the same, though they're hidden in drastically different locations. To make things a little harder, we've even hidden two of the grails on paizo.com. Find all twelve and email their locations to contest@paizo.com with the subject line "Grail Giveaway" and we'll award FIFTY of the correct entrants a Spamalot-related prize pack. (See paizo.com/spamalotgiveaway for additional details.) Don't let a set of Monty Python coconuts escape your grasp—enter today! All entries must be received by April 30, 2007. Void where prohibited.

Which is why we chose instead to publish an awesome "prequel" adventure that leads the PCs right up to the first encounter in the original adventure. If you have a copy of The Lost City, *you can pretty much start running that adventure right at the end of "Masque of Dreams." Of course, you'll need to do a fair bit of updating to all of those stat blocks, but since so many of the creatures in the adventure have gone on to become classic monsters on their own, that job might be easier than it sounds.* —James Jacobs

The Distraction

BY TIM HITCHCOCK
BY JULIE DILLON
BY ROB LAZZARETTI

ANY SETTING | LOW LEVEL (1ST–5TH) | WILDERNESS

Trapped within the makeshift walls of Fort Chance, the frontier settlers of the Aldersgrove Provinces await certain death beneath the blades of the gnoll hordes that once protected them. Although the Kingsguard is on its way, the gnolls are mobilizing too rapidly. Unless the gnoll incursion suffers a major setback, the Kingsguard will arrive just in time to watch Fort Chance burn to the ground.

"The Distraction" is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure for four 3rd-level PCs, set in a frontier settlement where the forest meets the badlands. Because this is largely a mountaineering adventure, a character with emphasis on the Climb skill would help parties immensely. It is also recommended that you review the wilderness rules on pages 86–89 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* before running this adventure.

Adventure Background

As is so often the case, the decisions of sovereigns fall hardest on the common folk, who face the repercussions of their words far from the safety of castle walls. The peasants of the Aldersgrove Provinces know this all too well. Recently, Lord Bransten the Righteous proclamed that the resident gnoll tribes, previously granted free occupation of the badlands in exchange for their protection of the Provinces' western borders, must pay him fealty. Lord Bransten expected the gnolls to reject the new terms and migrate elsewhere, but by the time he realized how badly he'd misjudged them, it was too late.

Refusing to relinquish their ancestral lands, the gnolls rapidly congregated and drove all human settlers from the badlands. As gnoll raids grew increasingly brazen, human refugees banded together in a last-ditch attempt to build a fortress capable of defending the Provinces. Now those same refugees stare out from the crude walls of Fort Chance at the massing gnoll hordes on the northern banks of the Gosmaw River. During the spring thaw, the river churns in wild, tumultuous torrents too dangerous for an army to cross, but every day the water level drops further, and it's only a matter of time before a tide of beastmen rolls south and washes the refugees away.

Adventure Synopsis

Fort Chance is a small outpost suffering from regular gnoll raids. Unless the PCs can somehow delay the advance of the gnoll army, a full incursion reaches the fort in a few days and burns it to the ground. Given nothing but a map and a target, the PCs must sneak out of the fort without allowing gnoll attackers to spot them and rush for the surrounding wood. Rumored to be haunted, the forest houses vicious twig blights that hunt all life within its borders, as evidenced by grisly effigies. Once out of the forest, the PCs cross the Godsmaw River and defeat a small gnoll outpost guarding the entrance to Blood Hawk Trail. In addition to blood hawk murders roosting in the surrounding precipices, a mad

ettercap stalks the trail, having already slaughtered the northernmost gnoll outpost. Atop the plateau, the PCs locate an ancient prayer chamber guarded by a foul monster. The chamber sits above a primitive mausoleum now occupied by a flind cleric of Yeenoghu. The PCs must descend into the chamber, defeat the priest, and find a hidden exit that leads to the ruins of an ancient village within striking distance of the gnolls' cattle. There they can create a disturbance capable of stampeding the herd. Lastly, the PCs must evade angered troops, either by going back along Blood Hawk Trail or by making a rapid descent down the rocky embankments and diving into the river below. If they succeed, they can distract the gnolls long enough for Lord Bransten's cavalry to arrive.

Adventure Hooks

The adventure begins when the PCs reach Fort Chance, where they quickly learn of the dire predicament facing the Aldersgrove settlers. Use any of the following options to get the PCs involved with the residents.

- A noble whose holdings border the Provinces hires the PCs to travel to Fort Chance and send back word of the situation. The noble seeks to win Bransten's favor, but has seriously underestimated the gnoll threat.
- One of the PCs has relatives or friends living in the Provinces. When word of the situation reaches the character, he must hurry to Fort Chance to prevent its destruction.
- The PCs catch wind that the Aldersgrove Provinces need adventurers to protect their borders. Lord Bransten has posted a royal bounty of 10 gp per gnoll scalp, and Fort Chance offers free food and lodging to anyone collecting bounties in Bransten's name.

FORT CHANCE

Perched at the edge of a raging river, Fort Chance is little more than a makeshift wall of raw birch and alder planks hastily lashed together and sealed with pitch. Wooden watchtowers break the perimeter at regular intervals, each one occupied by a pair of archers. The whole thing looks as if the slightest spark could turn it into a colossal pyre. Beyond the fort, the cruel spires of the badland hills mar the horizon, but even those are overshadowed by the seething mass of figures and tents lining the river's north bank. Columns of muddy refugees and crippled soldiers stretch from the fort's gates, and beyond the horde to the north, burning farms send up pillars of greasy smoke.

Fort Chance lies in a small gorge, half a mile south of the Godsmaw River and positioned to protect the larger farming provinces to the south. Hills on either side help to keep the territory defensible, but the gnoll raiding parties have still pillaged and destroyed most of the surrounding farm settlements reliant on the river for irrigation. To the east, the dense tangle of the Twilight Forest blocks troop movement, leaving the fort's only vulnerable side facing north, toward the river.

During the spring and early summer the river's water level rises, creating tumultuous rapids that are extremely dangerous to cross. Now, with the encroaching dry season, the receding waters herald the settlers' doom. Thus far, only a few small gnoll warbands have slunk across the river to raid defenseless private settlements, but within a couple of days the waters will drop low enough for the entire gnoll army to march across the Godsmaw and burn Fort Chance to ashes.

Hundreds of troops mass in full view along the Godsmaw's northern banks. Roving patrols on the southern side keep the fort under constant surveillance, sending back word to their commanders whenever something unusual occurs. The gnoll chieftains have ordered their warriors to allow further refugees into the fort, knowing that these stragglers only tax the humans' limited supplies.

The party encounters no opposition entering the complex, the guards having grown accustomed to the stream of refugees and mercenaries arriving over the last couple of weeks. As soon as the PCs pass the gate, they are pointed toward a small stacked-log building belonging to commanding officer Cam Donelly.

Fort Chance (Thorp): Conventional; AL LN; Population: 32 (+98 refugees); 50 gp limit; Assets 650 gp; Isolated (90% human, 5% half-elf, 3% half-orc, 2% other).

Authority Figure: Cam Donelly, commanding officer (LN human fighter 5)

Aside from the watchtowers, only two permanent structures stand inside the fort—Donelly's quarters and an open-sided storage facility. Both possess clay-shingled roofs to prevent them from catching fire. The remaining conscripts and refugees live in tents. Mostly farmers, the poorly equipped troops arm themselves with crude iron tools and the occasional game-hunting bow. Many have realized that they're attempting to hold off an army from inside a tinderbox and joke about it bitterly, referring to the fort as "Last Chance" or "No Chance."

Anyone taking more than a casual glance at the men notices that many of them bear a crude tattoo of a three-horned stag skull on the back of the wrist. A DC 12 Knowledge (local) check recognizes the design as a prison tattoo from a detainment camp called "Three Horns." Many of the better troops served sentences as indentured conscripts, and held posts in the badlands alongside the gnolls.

If players go directly to Cam's house, he answers the door and invites the PCs in. If they wait, he eventually catches wind of their arrival and seeks them out. Despite his silver hair and badly dented suit of mail, Cam seems fit enough to hold his own in combat. He introduces himself and questions the party brusquely about their combat and woodlands experience. Once convinced of their capability, he launches into the following offer.

"I wish I had more time for formalities, but our state of affairs is grim. Within the next two days, the Godsmaw will be safe enough for the gnoll troops to launch a full-scale attack against us; an attack we're not going to survive. That imbecile Bransten promised to send the Kingsguard, but they'll never make it in time. As it is, I have one hope, and that's to delay the gnoll attack for a couple of days, long enough

for the Kingsguard to arrive. I've got a plan, of course, but most of the men here aren't fit to attempt it, and those that are can't be trusted."

Opening a nearby trunk, Cam removes a leather map case and spreads a fine parchment map across the table, pointing to various features.

"To the east, past the Twilight Forest, is an ancient shaman's path called Blood Hawk Trail. It leads high into the hills and curves around behind where the gnoll army is mobilizing. If you could get there and disrupt their supply train—a massive herd of bison—it might be enough to buy us the time we need. Please, we're almost lost here, and we're important enough to the nobility that, if you aid us, I swear they'll provide you with a handsome reward."

Cam offers his map to the players, but can provide little other information—as soon as the PCs accept the task, he turns his attention to fortifying the compound. If they press, he knows only that both sides in the conflict avoid the foreboding Twilight Forest, and that the trail takes its name from the predatory birds that soar over the badlands.

Though Cam insists that the gnolls could come across the river any day now, the actual timeline of this adventure is flexible. As long as players don't dawdle or insist on resting after every encounter, they should be able to make it to the bison herd in time.

D1. Leaving the Fort (EL 5)

Arrows litter the shoreline along the south bank, while farther in, crumpled bodies lie scattered like broken marionettes in the summer heat. Small barricades gouge the countryside, and farmers huddle in shallow trenches. High above, blood hawks circle.

Creatures: Anyone seen leaving the fort risks attracting the attention of the gnoll scouts posted to the north (Spot +3). The gnolls wait until opponents distance themselves from the fort before rushing them from all sides.

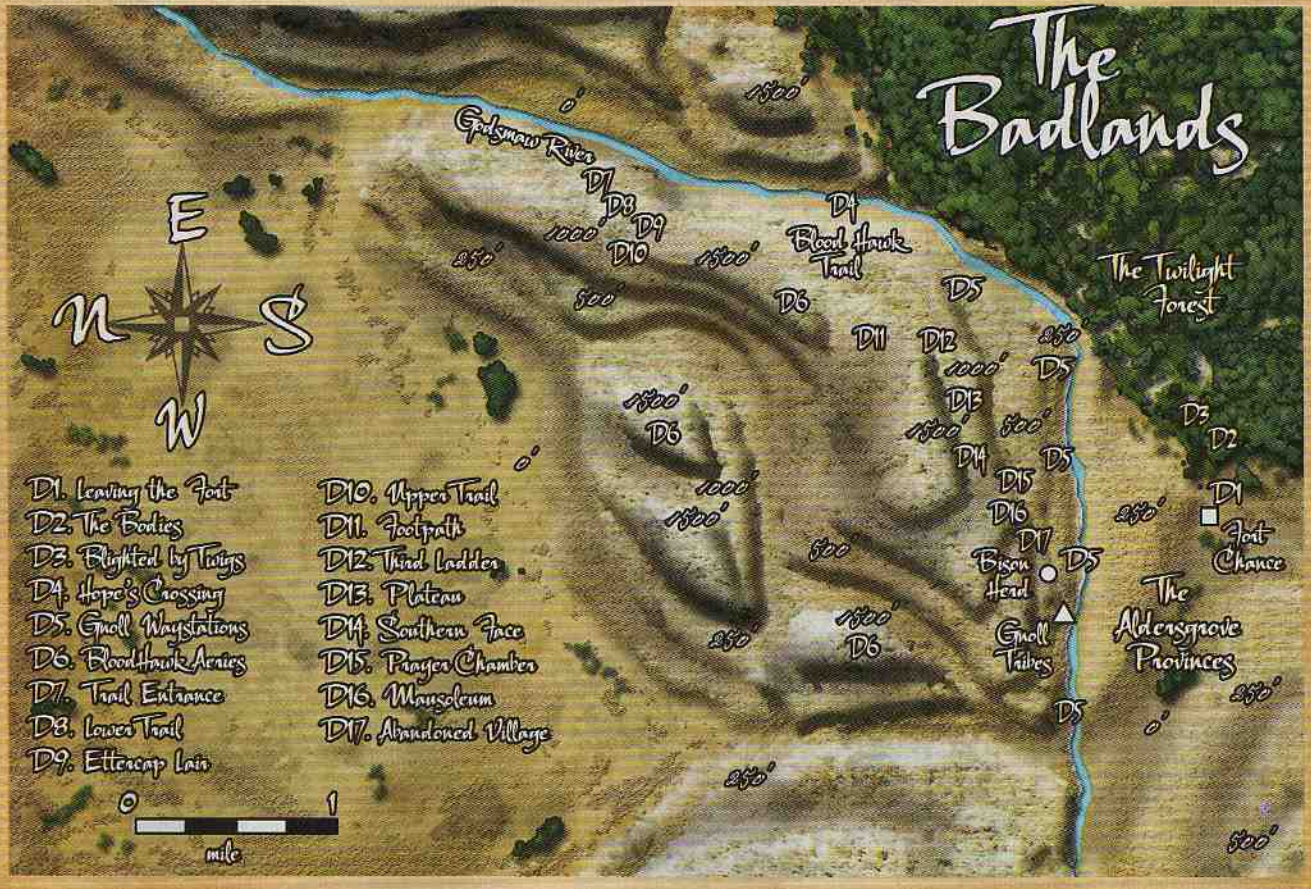
GNOLL RANGER **CR 3**

Male gnoll ranger 2
CE Medium humanoid
Monster Manual 130
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +3
Languages Gnoll

AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16
hp 37 (4 HD)
Fort +10, **Ref** +4, **Will** +3

Spd 30ft.
Melee mwk short sword +9 (1d6+4/19–20) or mwk short sword +7 (1d6+4/19–20) and mwk short sword +7 (1d6+2/19–20)
Ranged mwk composite longbow +5 (1d8 +4/×3)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +7
Atk Options favored enemy (humans +2)
Combat Gear *potion of cat's grace, potion of bull's strength*

Abilities Str 18, Dex 13, Con 18, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 6
SQ wild empathy +0
Feats Iron Will, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (short sword)
Skills Hide +5, Listen +2, Spot +3, Survival +6



Possessions combat gear, masterwork chain shirt, 2 masterwork short swords, masterwork composite longbow (+4 Str bonus) with 20 arrows, masterwork climber's kit.

Gnolls (3): hp 11 each; *Monster Manual* 130.

THE TWILIGHT FOREST

As the PCs work their way deeper into the wood, the trees grow tighter and the thick canopy blocks most of the sunlight, creating a strange twilight effect. Farther in, the birches turn sickly, their flaking bark yellowing and taking on the consistency of thick porridge. Green leaves fade to shades of brownish-gray while the tree trunks become twisted and thorny, like the spines of colossal beasts. The woods are unnervingly silent, and no birds or animals scamper in the dense underbrush.

D2. The Bodies

Up ahead, a dark shape resolves into the gutted body of a gnoll, crucified within the thorny branches of a large tree. Its cocked head leers down with empty eye sockets.

Horrid little humanoid-shaped plant monsters called twig blights infest the Twilight Forest, perpetuating its haunted reputation by marking their territory with the bodies of their prey. A PC making a DC 15 Heal or Knowledge (nature) check determines that the gnoll didn't die from the claw and tooth marks covering it's body, but rather from poison. A DC 15 Survival check recognizes that the ground bears no discernable footprints, and appears to have been swept clean with sticks and brush.

D3. Blighted by Twigs (EL 3)

A grisly display hangs in a small clearing ahead. Strung up in the branches of a small copse of trees, six gnoll bodies dangle lifelessly from nooses made from their own entrails. The ground beneath them is stained black with blood.

Creatures: Surrounding the perimeter of the clearing, a troop of eight twig blights lies in wait for victims.

TWIG BLIGHTS (8) **CR 1/3**
CE Small plant
Monster Manual II 197
Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +1, Spot +1
Languages Sylvan

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 14
hp 5 (1 HD); **DR** 5/bludgeoning or slashing
Immune plant traits
Fort +3, **Ref** +1, **Will** +0

Spd 20 ft.
Melee 2 claws +0 (1d3–1 plus poison)
Base Atk +1; **Grp** –4
Special Atk poison (Fort DC 11; 1 Str/no secondary damage)

Abilities Str 8, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 5, Wis 11, Cha 4
Feats Stealthy
Skills Hide +8, Move Silently +4

Tactics: The twig blights hide, waiting for as many victims as possible to enter the clearing before attacking. Unless the PCs spot them first, the twig blights hold their attacks until someone triggers the trap or the party begins to exit.

On their round, the twig blights charge from every direction, indiscriminately attacking the nearest opponents. Emboldened by recent victories, the bloodthirsty creatures fight to the death.

Trap: The twig blights set these corpses as decoys and trapped them. Each gnoll stomach is filled with yellow mold. As soon as any creature disturbs a body, its stomach bursts, spewing toxic spores in a 10-foot radius. If encountered during the day, the spores only do primary damage, before the minimal sunlight leaking through the forest canopy renders them dormant.

At night or in darkness, the CR of this trap increases to 4 as the spores do 2d6 Con secondary damage (same Fortitude save) and are not rendered dormant.

Moldy Gnoll Stomach Trap: CR 3; mechanical; touch trigger; no reset; 10-foot burst (1d6 Con; Fortitude save DC 15 negates); Search DC 15; Disable Device DC 15.

Treasure: Though their leather armor is destroyed, the dead gnolls still possess a small amount of treasure. Each carries a longsword and a pouch with 25 gp. In addition, one wears an ivory necklace carved in the shape of a three-headed flail (worth 20 gp), another has a small iolite crystal worth 50 gp, and a third carries a climber's kit.

D4. Hope's Crossing (EL 4)

The forest runs along the ridges of the eastern hills, eventually coming to a gentle slope that intersects with a small logging trail. A hundred yards ahead, the trail ends at an extremely wide bend in the river. Approximately seventy feet across, the waters flow hard out of the northern badlands and sweep west into the Aldersgrove Provinces. The charred remains of thick wooden supports poke out of the torrent like black-tipped fingers. On the opposite side, the russet hills climb sharply into the sky.

Locals call this place Hope's Crossing. A few months ago, Cam ordered the bridge torched to make things difficult for the gnolls. On the map, scribbled handwriting near the icon for this bridge reads "burnt." Characters successfully searching for tracks uncover only a few old and barely visible boot prints.

The fast-moving river races angrily over and around jagged rocks. Its steep banks descend at a rate of two feet per square and reach a maximum depth of 10 feet in the center. Anyone wading more than waist deep into the river must make a successful DC 12 Strength check or the brutal currents sweep them 10+1d20 feet downstream. Swimming the Godsmaw requires a DC 15 Swim check. Players failing Swim checks must make an additional check to prevent going under (see page 304 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for more details).

Creatures: A small gnoll patrol hides behind fallen boulders on the far side of the river, covered with a tan canvas and burnt timbers from the bridge. A successful DC 10 Spot check notices the gnolls from the near bank. They hold their fire until the players enter the river, then attempt to pick them off with their bows. If half their group is killed, one of the remaining gnolls runs southwest down

the road for reinforcements, returning 15 minutes later with six more gnolls.

Gnolls (4): hp 11 each; *Monster Manual* 130.

Developments: If any of the gnolls escape, the reinforcements may be able to follow the PCs up onto Blood Hawk Trail.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: Grant characters that cross successfully XP for defeating a CR 2 monster.

D5. Gnoll Waystations (EL 6)

Creatures: Several small waystations litter the trail tracing the north bank, which the gnolls use to relay messages and keep guard. Small patrols travel back and forth between stations scouting for possible human counterattacks. Set in half-mile increments, each waystation consists of a small tent set behind a crude barricade of rubble, boulders, and branches. A patrol of gnolls and hyenas under the command of a gnoll ranger guards each station. A DC 10 Spot check identifies a waystation (not including penalties for distance).

Wandering patrols appear on the road approximately every 20 minutes and consist of one gnoll ranger, 1d4 gnolls, and 1d4 hyenas.

Gnoll Ranger (1): hp 36; see page 17.

Gnolls (3): hp 11 each; *Monster Manual* 130.

Hyenas (2): hp 13 each; *Monster Manual* 274.

Developments: Slain gnolls draw the attention of other gnolls. Once a patrol discovers evidence of conflict, it immediately sends a runner for reinforcements while the remaining patrol members investigate and pursue. Clever players can slow pursuit by hiding evidence and covering their tracks.

D6. Blood Hawk Aeries (EL 1–3)

Dozens of blood hawk aeries balance precariously along the steep cliff faces of the surrounding hills. Throughout the day, hawks circle high above the valley. Every so often, one plummets thousands of feet into the valley and emerges moments later with its talons clenched around a small game animal. At least twice each day, 1d4+2 blood hawks fly near enough to the players to spot them. Blood hawks spotting players immediately attack, shrieking loudly before entering combat and possibly (20% chance) attracting the attention of 1d4 additional blood hawks that arrive in 1d4 rounds. At night, blood hawks return to their aeries and attack only if disturbed. Players passing within 40 feet of an aerie risk waking the birds and must make a Move Silently check each turn to avoid doing so. A typical aerie contains 4d6 blood hawks.

Blood Hawk **CR 1/2**

N Small magical beast

Fiend Folio 22

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +2, Spot +2 (+10 during daylight)

Languages none

AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 13

hp 5 (1 HD)

Fort +2, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1

Spd 10 ft.; fly 80 ft. (average)

Melee 2 claws +5 (1d3+1) and bite +0 (1d4)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** –2

Special Atk wounding

Abilities Str 13, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 7

Feats Weapon Finesse

Skills Hide +5, Search –3

Wounding (Ex) A wound resulting from a blood hawk's claw or bite attack bleeds for an additional 1 point of damage

per round thereafter. Multiple wounds from such attacks result in cumulative bleeding loss (two wounds for 2 points of damage per round, and so on). The bleeding can be stopped by a DC 15 Heal check or the application of any magical healing.

D7. Trail Entrance

As the river veers north, its banks narrow and the sloping cliffs on either side grow steeper. Adorning the cliff walls at impossible heights are the weathered remains of mystic petroglyphs carved by the ancient shamans. Thousands of feet up, where the ridgeline cuts into the sky, blood hawks circle in swirls of black. Farther along the trail, something glints silver.

A DC 10 Spot check recognizes the glint as signs of a gnoll waystation. PCs observing the waystation detect nothing moving within, and those who approach find it vacant and covered in thick gray spider webs. Torn tents, blood, broken weapons, and splinters of wood imply a struggle, but a search uncovers no bodies.

The ransacked waystation is the work of an ettercap that lives farther up Blood Hawk Trail. After killing the gnolls, the creature carried off their bodies and skinned them. A battleaxe dropped by one of the gnolls posted at the station caused the glint.

The gnolls deliberately placed this waystation at the foot of Blood Hawk Trail, though little here reveals it. Clearing away the webs along the cliff face (Search DC 10) uncovers a large boulder resting near the cliff, 8 feet in diameter with its top shorn cleanly off. Before it, a rope and timber ladder lies broken in the dust.

D8. The Lower Trail

Atop the shorn boulder, two rows of tiny, two-inch-wide holes approximately a half-inch deep are carved into the sheer cliff face. Spaced about a foot and a half apart, they ascend in a staggered pattern.

These small hand- and footholds make the otherwise sheer rock possible to climb (Climb DC 15). The first flight ascends vertically for 100 feet, eventually reaching a small series of narrow ledges crudely carved into three precipitous flights of stairs wrapping around the back side of the hill.

D9. The Ettercap Lair (EL 4)

This twenty-foot-by-forty-foot landing is littered with piles of bleached bones and more of the coarse webs that shroud the

waystation below. Swaths of webbing trace the stairs, and tiny mountain spiders scoot across them, converging on the corpse of an entangled baby blood hawk. Its swaying body casts unnerving shadows.

Allow the PCs to make a DC 10 Spot check. If they make it, read the following:

Suddenly the shadows flicker as a large, scruffy gnoll pokes its head around the corner at the top of the stairs, quickly darting back out of sight and grumbling something undecipherable.

A DC 20 Spot check reveals that there's something odd about the creature, but due to the angle, PCs are unable to put their finger on it.

Creatures: A small, 15-foot-square cave rests atop the third staircase. Once used by shamans as a place of quiet meditation, an ettercap now nests there with its pet spider swarm. The creature previously survived by hunting blood hawks, but now supplements its diet with wayward gnolls. The clever ettercap disguises itself by wearing gnoll skins and can duplicate a few common gnoll phrases.

Myxtrichichk, Ettercap: hp 27; *Monster Manual* 106.

Spider Swarm: hp 9; *Monster Manual* 239.

Tactics: As PCs approach, the ettercap calls out in Common, "Watch your step, beasts—you're trespassing on gnoll territory!" Having thus drawn attention to the top of the stairwell, the ettercap maneuvers around the back side of the canyon wall, attempting to climb the cliff face and pass above the PCs to where it can flank them. Meanwhile its pet spider swarm continues making scurrying noises within the cave to hold their attention. If spotted, the ettercap simply drops on them from above. In the first few rounds, the creature uses its web to entangle foes, while its pet spiders swarm them. Next, it closes on prey, clawing and biting. If possible, the ettercap bull rushes opponents near the edge, hoping to knock them 50 feet to a ledge below so it can eat their corpses later. It fights until reduced below 5 hit points, whereupon it flees along the canyon walls, potentially returning to harry the party at a later time.

Treasure: A DC 15 Search check of the bones and debris in this cave uncovers a *ring of feather falling.*

D10. The Upper Trail

From this ledge the party has a breathtaking view of canyon walls plummeting hundreds of feet into the Godsmaw. To the south, the badland hills roll into the Twilight Forest and, beyond that, the Aldersgrove Provinces where Fort Chance still stands. The cliff face blocks any view of the southern vale and the massing gnoll troops.

From here the climb becomes easier as the trail climbs toward the apex of the hill, weaving through large boulders and tall buttes for several miles. Eventually, the players work their way around the hills into a tapered chasm. Toward the narrow side, thick wooden boughs set into the rock form a crude ladder (Climb DC 0). At the top of the chasm, a small cairn identifies a steep and extremely narrow footpath that twists along the perimeter of the north face.

D11. The Footpath (EL 4)

A narrow footpath three feet wide curves precariously around the cliff, climbing slowly for hundreds of feet. On its exposed side, the sheer cliff face drops away into the valley below, broken only by a few small ledges.

Individuals can move safely along the footpath at half speed, but those attempting faster or complicated movement risk losing their footing and falling. Each round an individual attempts to attack or move faster than half speed, he or she must make a DC 5 Balance check or fall prone on the trail. Failure by 5 or more results in a drop to another ledge 40 feet down.

Creatures: This highly exposed section of trail turns travelers into targets for blood hawks. About halfway across, six blood hawks spot them and attack.

Blood Hawks (6): hp 5 each; see page 19.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: Due to the treacherous nature of the terrain,

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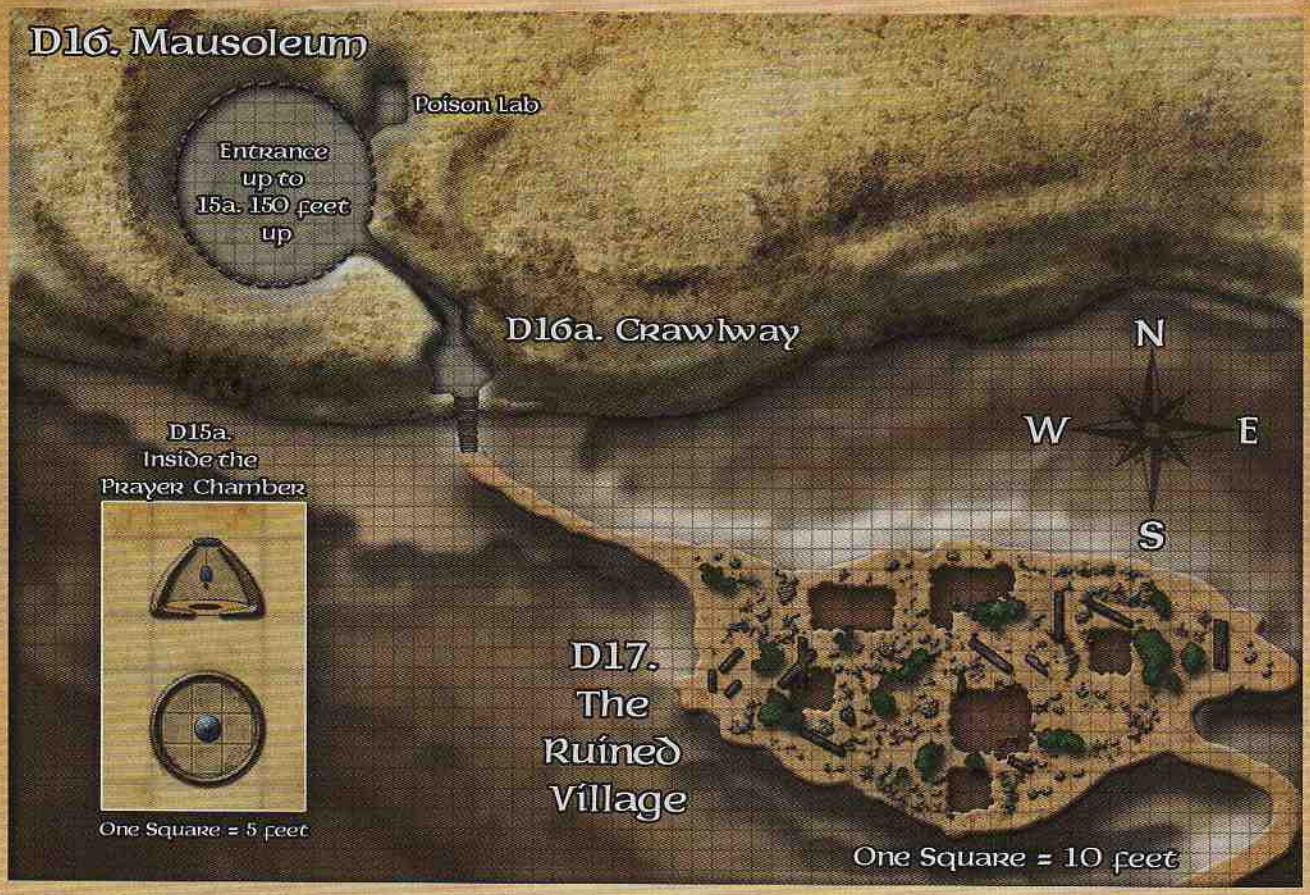

award PCs who defeat the blood hawks an additional CR 1 experience award.

D12. The Third Ladder

Around the opposite side of the hill, the footpath ends abruptly. More manmade handholds scar the crag, though the incline lessens, making the climb easier (Climb DC 11). The handholds lead up another hundred feet.

D13. The Plateau

At the top of the climb, the slope levels off drastically, widening into a long plateau. Here, the trail twists south, and several small cairns mark its ascent towards the summit. The plateau's edge drops over a quarter-mile, leaving players even with the crests of most of the other nearby crags, whose outcroppings churn ominously with roosting blood hawks.

D14. The Southern Face

After several miles, the trail terminates in a small stone fire pit at the plateau's southern edge. Nearby stands a strange, hive-shaped structure made out of clay. Below, the cliff face plunges thousands of feet into the vale where the massive gnoll camp seethes like an anthill. Directly below the plateau, an ancient cliff dwelling rests precariously on a narrow ledge overlooking the lower vale. On a shorter plateau below it grazes a herd of bison.

Though the bison make a tempting target, they are still out of range. The ruined cliff dwelling, on the other hand, stands only a hundred feet below. A DC 15 Spot checks notice a few gnolls camped among the ruins, looking out over the valley. Reaching the ruins by descending the vertical cliff face without using climbing gear is difficult without magic—the sheer stone flakes easily, making it a DC 25 Climb check. Fortunately, an easier path exists inside the giant clay mound—an ancient prayer chamber.

D15. The Prayer Chamber (EL 2)

This structure looks like a fifteen-foot-tall clay beehive. A line of short, protruding wooden stakes creates a ladder leading to a thick cap of woven plant fibers at the structure's apex.

The disk at the hive's top shields a small circular opening. Players can make a DC 12 bardic knowledge, Knowledge (local), or Knowledge (religion) to correctly identify the structure as an ancient shamanic prayer chamber. The spikes allow anyone to easily climb to the entrance.

Trap: As soon as anyone using the handholds climbs halfway up, a loud "click" sounds and the nearest spike shoots out, extending to the length of a spear and impaling the trespasser before quickly retracting. Twisting the lowest spike 180 degrees allows a character to bypass the trap, which automatically resets 10 minutes later.

Trapped Handhold: CR 2; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset, 10 minutes; hidden switch bypass; Atk +10 melee (1d8+3); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 20.

Though woven from saplings, a permanent *ironwood* spell keeps the lid hard and heavy. A rope tied to the center of the disk suspends a skull-sized iron prayer bell that holds the lid down. Whenever the lid moves, the bell rings. A DC 20 bardic knowledge or Knowledge (religion) check recalls that ancient shamans customarily rang the bell four times before entering, once for each cardinal direction. To do this, they'd knock three times, then move the lid. They believed that the sound of the bell cleansed the air of evil spirits.

Developments: Each time the bell sounds, allow Nughoak in area **D16** a DC 15 Listen check. If he succeeds, the bell alerts him and he prepares for combat (see Nughoak's tactics). He gains a +2 circumstance bonus to his Listen checks for each additional time the bell rings.

D15a. Inside the Chamber (EL 2)

The chamber within is unfurnished and spotlessly clean. Thousands of tiny petroglyphs adorn the clay walls, circling the cramped chamber in an enormous spiral. Four fist-sized iron rings mounted to the floor rest at the cardinal points, with the northernmost one trailing a thick rope.

In the center of the prayer chamber, directly beneath the entrance, another 5-foot-wide opening drops 50 feet into the massive mausoleum below. Safely entering the room without a rope requires a successful Tumble check (DC 10), with failure indicating the character falls prone and must make a DC 10 Reflex save to avoid falling into the shaft. During the day, light from the entrance provides shadowy illumination. At night, the chamber is dark.

Shamans used to fasten climbing ropes to the four rings in order to descend into the room below. Each can hold up to 500 pounds before coming loose. Nughoak uses the single rope to ascend to the plateau and converse with the vargouille, whom he has tentatively befriended.

Iron Rings: 1/4 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 7; Break DC 24.

Creature: Inside the prayer chamber waits an ancient creature that the shamans called the guardian spirit, a foul vargouille summoned from the depths of Carceri and bound to guard the prayer chamber. If the PCs rang the bell four times, the vargouille remains hovering in the corner, staring at them with its ghastly glowing eyes and attacking only if players attack it first. If the PCs fail to cleanse the chamber before entering, it attacks.

Shalat, Vargouille: hp 5; *Monster Manual* 254.

Tactics: The vargouille initiates attacks with its shriek ability, paralyzing characters and alerting Nughoak in area **D16**. Next, it attempts to use its kiss ability on paralyzed opponents. Taking full advantage of the darkness and its ability to fly, it positions itself near the wide opening to the mausoleum. It alternates between its three attacks and, if presented with the opportunity, bull rushes opponents into the hole.

D16. The Mausoleum (EL 6)

This gargantuan cavern represents the culmination of tremendous effort by primitive architects. Chiseled into the surrounding stone, its shape mimics the prayer chamber, only many times larger. The fifty-foot-high circular walls bow outward, lined with scores of stone plug doors graven with mystic seals. A font in the shape of a hideous, three-headed flail adorns the mausoleum floor, half-filled with reeking black ichor.

A DC 12 bardic knowledge, Knowledge (local), or Knowledge (religion) check identifies the room as an ancient mausoleum. The chamber is unlit and has no apparent exits, but a DC 20 Search check reveals broken seals on two of the stone plugs. The first plug opens into a dark crawlway (area **D16a**), while the second hides Nughoak's lab.

Stone Plugs: 4 inches thick; Hardness 8; hp 60; Break DC 28.

Creatures: Long abandoned by the region's indigenous people, this mausoleum was recently claimed by a flind cleric named Nughoak, who is currently in the process of converting it to a temple of Yeenoghu. As soon as intruders alert him, he casts *bull's strength* and as many protective spells as possible before hiding in the shadows with his hyenas. As soon as half the players enter the chamber, he casts *darkness* while the hyenas charge intruders. He casts *cause fear* before entering melee, alternating between offensive spells and melee attacks.

NUGHOAK **CR 5**

Male flind cleric 4 (Yeenoghu)
CE Medium humanoid (gnoll)
Monster Manual III 62
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +7, Spot +7
Languages Common, Elven, Gnoll

AC 20, touch 12, flat-footed 18
hp 54 (6 HD)
Fort +11 **Ref** +3 **Will** +7

Spd 30 ft.
Melee +1 *flindbar* +8 (2d4+3 plus poison/19–20)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +6
Atk Options furious strike 1/day, poison (bloodroot; injury DC 11; no initial damage/1d4 Con + 1d3 Wis)
Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*
Spells Prepared (CL 4th; +6 touch)
2nd—*bull's strength*[D], *darkness*, *death knell* (DC 15), *spiritual weapon*
1st—*bane* (DC 14), *cause fear* (DC 14), *doom* (DC 14), *entropic shield*, *protection from law*[D]
0—*cure minor wounds*, *resistance* (3)
D domain spell; **Domains** Chaos, Fury

Abilities Str 14, Dex 15, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 10
Feats Combat Reflexes, Skill Focus (Craft [poisonmaking]), Skill Focus (Handle Animal), Weapon Focus (Flindbar)
Skills Concentration +8, Craft (poisonmaking) +8, Diplomacy +4, Handle Animal +3, Knowledge (religion) +3, Listen +7, Spot +7, Spellcraft +5
Possessions combat gear, studded leather armor, +1 *heavy metal shield*, +1 *flindbar*, 2 vials of antitoxin, *potion of pass without trace*, 2 doses of bloodroot, 1 dose of malyss root paste, necklace with onyx three-headed flail (holy symbol worth 60 gp), 65 gp

Domains Once per day as a free action, Nughoak's Fury domain allows him to designate a single creature or object as the target of his fury, gaining a +2 profane bonus to hit the designated target and dealing an extra 2 points of damage with each successful strike. These bonuses persist until a new target is chosen.

Treasure: Nughoak uses one of the ossuaries as a lab to brew poison. In addition to a masterwork alchemist kit and dozens of beakers, liquids, and herbs, he also keeps recipes for three poisons: bloodroot, oil of taggit, and malyss root paste. Each recipe provides the brewer a +5 bonus to Craft (poisonmaking) skill checks to create the specific poison. In a small chest rests one dose of each poison.

Developments: Each of the remaining stone plugs shelters a small alcove that serves as an ossuary. All are marked with sacred symbols and brief epitaphs in Common. Anyone breaking one of the seals wakes the ancestral spirit within. The spirit rises as a wraith (*Monster Manual* 258) and attacks the defiler, cursing him for the disturbance. Resealing the tomb and reciting the epitaph puts the spirit back to rest. The corpse in each tomb wears a gold medallion worth 50 gp.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: Award full experience to any character that lays a spirit to rest by reciting an epitaph.

D16a. The Crawlway

The unlit clay tunnel behind the stone plug is cramped and claustrophobic. Barely wide enough for a single human to pass through, it proceeds for several hundred yards before curving away toward the southern face. Eventually it opens wider, forming a small cave. A few worn sacks and a threadbare bedroll lie bunched up in a corner. Another crude ladder rests against the lip of the cave and descends to an untended footpath that trails into the hills below.

This cave is Nughaok's private quarters. The bedroll is filthy and covered with hair. The various sacks contain stained robes, a rusty knife, strings of wooden beads, and a rotting human hand.

D17. Abandoned Village (EL 5)

The path descends for a half-mile, winding gently down the hillside towards a shallow plateau covered in overgrown ruins, the remains of an ancient village long crumbled to piles of clay bricks and broken timbers. Another six hundred feet below the southern overhang roams an immense herd of bison grazing peacefully on dry grasses. To the far end of the bison field, a sizable unit of gnoll troops camps near a wide dirt trail leading down into the vale. Near the western edge of the ruins, another narrow trail descends a quarter-mile to the bison field.

Creatures: Stationed in the ruins, a cadre of gnolls oversees the protection of the bison herd below. They face the vale, not expecting any trouble from the cliff behind them, and as such have a –10 penalty on their Spot check. Should characters draw attention to themselves, the gnolls initiate attacks with arrows before charging into melee, fighting to the death.

Gnolls (5): hp 11 each; *Monster Manual* 130.

Along the south face, the gnolls erected makeshift barricades out of stones and old clay bricks. The south face is steep, except for the small footpath cut into the hill that leads down to the pasture below.

The scree-covered eastern slope sweeps down into the river at a gentle 60-degree angle. Creatures attempting to run down the slope risk stumbling (Balance DC 12). Creatures who lose their footing slip and slide

Nughoak

for 1d20+40 feet and take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage, continuing to slide unless they stop themselves with a DC 15 Climb or Tumble check. After three such checks, the scree is replaced by grass and no more checks are required.

Developments: Once the players seize the abandoned village, allow them to formulate a plan to create a distraction. Hopefully, they realize continuing is suicidal, but if they press on they eventually attract the attention of the gnoll army. The gnolls retaliate in full force, first sending in packs of hyenas under the cover of their bows, then closing ranks to engage opponents in melee.

The most obvious diversion involves stampeding the cattle. This can be accomplished in a number of ways, such as spooking the herd with a loud noise, pushing bricks and timbers down onto the herd, or igniting the dry scrub grass below. PC innovation should be encouraged, bearing in mind that some methods, such as poisoning, might take too long to save Fort Chance. Once startled, the herd is a juggernaut, running over the tops of its handlers and even cascading over cliffs in its desperation.

As soon as the distraction begins, allow some of the gnolls below to make Spot checks opposed by PC Hide checks. If they spot the players, they immediately dispatch packs of hyenas and gnoll handlers. Though the gnolls dangerously outnumber the PCs, the quarter-mile of steep terrain provides the party with plenty of time to make a getaway, either by returning via Blood Hawk Trail or by descending the eastern slope and swimming across the river to safety. If they take the trail, stalling tactics like cutting the rope in **D15** or plugging the crawlway are enough to discourage pursuit.

Concluding the Adventure

Provided the characters complete their mission in time, the Kingsguard arrives in time to bolster Fort Chance, forcing the gnolls on the opposite bank to stall and rethink their strategy. As promised, the local nobles are more than happy to reward them with 1,000 gp each for their good work. In addition, Lord Bransten quickly takes credit for hiring them, presenting each PC with a token of noble approval that guarantees them aid and preferential treatment in any future dealings they might have in his holdings or with his allies—though whether that token carries any weight remains to be seen.

If PCs fail to create a sufficient distraction within a few days, the gnolls march across the Godsmaw at sunset, slaughtering the poorly equipped farmers and surrounding Fort Chance. Miraculously, Cam's troops hold the fort for nearly a day, but by the next night the gnolls transform it into a blazing pyre. If the PCs escape, they may find themselves hunted by angry refugees or by Lord Bransten himself, eager to shift some of the blame for the fiasco off of his own shoulders.

Scaling The Adventure

"The Distraction" is designed for a group of four 3rd-level characters, but with a little work it can be adapted for 1st–2nd or 4th–5th level. Simply adjust NPC character levels by the amount that the average party level deviates from 3. Don't forget to scale treasure appropriately. Specific changes to the adventure include:

1st–2nd Level: Allow players a few more days to complete their mission, so they can rest between encounters. Remove character levels from the gnolls, decrease the number of twig blights in the forest, change some of the blood hawks to hawks. Slow the river speed down. Change the flind to a gnoll.

4th–5th Level: Allow players only one or two days to complete their mission. Increase the number of gnolls and hyenas by 3 and the number of twig blights and blood hawks by 4 per each level increase.

Tim lives on the north shore of Staten Island. During the day, he teaches science in Coney Island, where he and his students are currently trying to breed their own flumphs. Most recently, he's contracted a rare form of lycanthropy that transforms him into a werecabbage whenever the light of a computer strikes him.

THE PORTENT

by Peter Bergting

I'M FED UP WITH YOUR PETER JACKSON FANTASIES. I'M NOT DOING THE LOTR RE-ENACTMENT AGAIN. IT'S STUPID, POINTLESS AND I ALWAYS END UP GETTING HURT!
COME ON, WE'RE FILMING THIS TIME, AND YOU HAVE THAT CUTE GANDALF OUTFIT AND THE WEE LI'L SWORD AND ALL. PLEEEEASSSE.
-SIGH-
REMEMBER, PAIN IS TEMPORARY -- YOUTUBE IS FOREVER!

Seeds of Sehan Part 1

Vile Addiction

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ANY SETTING | MID- LEVEL (6TH–12TH) | URBAN AND DUNGEON CRAWL

The paranoid and xenophobic residents of the remote city of Exag have found a new way to escape from their miserable existence, but the horrific side effects of their latest addiction may bring doom even to those who think themselves its masters. While madmen and prophets alike preach of the Purifier who is remaking the people of Exag into his own alien image, others see the work of evil, scheming beings with unknown motives. Only a few understand the horror for what it really is, as drug-crazed mobs and metamorphosed monsters bring the seeds of chaos to another reality.

An adventure designed for four 8th-level characters, "Vile Addiction" is the first installment in the 3-part Seeds of Sehan campaign arc.

Adventure Background

Years ago, through rites both diabolic and vile, the spriggan Rakeri learned the secrets of gaining power through the consumption of living souls, and with it the power to destroy utterly. But this power of consumption carried a terrible price, and ever since Rakeri has been driven by a maddening hunger. A monstrous glutton, Rakeri wandered the land, gorging himself on countless souls. During his travels he formed a gang of "lesser" spriggans, vicious creatures who imagined their petty malicious activities the height of wickedness. Rakeri showed them the folly of such thinking. He controls them by alternately promising them the power of the soul-eater and devouring any that oppose him or try and escape.

When Rakeri reached the isolated city of Exag at the edge of the Yatil Mountains, he found a city inhabited by primitive tribes who had no organized city watch and only a rudimentary government—a place where his feedings might go unnoticed for years. He could finally settle down and focus on enhancing his own powers. His spriggan gang descended into the sewers, cleared a wererat pack out of the caverns they discovered there, and set themselves up in their new home.

The spriggans wasted no time in stalking the streets of Exag. The natives blamed frequent disappearances on their greatest fear: incursions from outside the city walls. With some difficulty, Rakeri paced his consumption, lest he attract too much attention.

GREEN WELCOME

Description: Green Welcome, a drug derived from Sehan, is a highly addictive chemical resembling grayish-green mucus. It follows the standard rules for drugs detailed in Chapter 3 of *Book of Vile Darkness*. Green Welcome has a save DC of 15, and like a posion has an inital and secondary effect. A character that volunterily takes the drug automatically fails both saving throws.

Additionally, upon initial exposure (whether he takes the drug willingly or not), a character must succeed at a DC 14 Fortitude save or become addicted. Once a character is additiced, he must take a dose of the drug at least once every two days or suffer withdrawl symptoms. Each day the character is in withdrawl, he must make a DC 19 Fortitude save or suffer 1d6 Dex, 1d6 Wis, and 1d2 Con damage. If, a character makes two consecutive saves during the withdrawal period, he is freed of the addiction to the drug.

Type: Ingested DC 15

Initial Effect: 1d4 points of Wisdom damage and 1d4 points of Intelligence damage.

Secondary Effect: 1d4+1 enhancement bonus to Strength for 1 hour.

Price: 50 gp.

Side Effects: The Green Welcome fills the user with a feeling of strength, contentment, and belonging. While under the drug's effect, the user is immune to supernatural or magical fear effects and cannot feel pain for 1d4 hours.

Overdose: If more than one dose is taken in a 24-hour period, the user falls unconscious for 1d4 hours and suffers 1 point of permanent Wisdom drain. A second overdose causes a horrifying transformation into a near-mindless plant-like creature covered in glistening slime: a child of Sehan (see Appendix).

Addiction: High

After a few months, Rakeri spotted and ambushed a stranger skulking through the city clutching a green vial. The man refused to answer questions about the strange substance, instead babbling about "Great Sehan" and struggling to keep Rakeri and his gang from examining the vials of "holy sacrament." Resorting to torture, Rakeri learned of the Cult of Sehan, whose leader's secretions were contained in the vials—a substance the cultist simply called Sehan.

Experimentation on the vials revealed addictive qualities and intense euphoria. Rakeri had a lesser spriggan sample it and learned that it had a pleasant effect as well as enhancing physical strength, though the spriggan discovered too late that too much of the substance transformed the user into a slimy, plant-like monster.

Rakeri realized that if he could modify the substance so that its users didn't transform, he could use the green secretion to make Exag his own—a city full of slaves, awaiting his hunger. The visions of power rushing through his mind were as sweet as the death throes of any innocent he had ever consumed.

It took a couple of months, but a cross-country trek and a raid on Perrenland netted a group of gnome alchemists who were "persuaded" to work on producing a less potent version of the drug.

After weeks of experimentation and research, Rakeri's gnomes found what they believe to be the perfect strain. Rakeri's gang began selling it to unsuspecting locals in Exag under the name Green Welcome, and so far things have gone exactly as planned. Unfortunately, the gnomes made an error in their calculations, and Green Welcome retains enough of Sehan to destroy Rakeri's plans, along with the rest of the city.

Adventure Synopsis

The characters enter the mysterious city of Exag, where they run afoul of a gang of spriggan drug dealers. The evil fey have developed a drug from a mysterious secretion of a creature they know little to nothing about. They seek to create a city full of drug addicts under their control, but have seriously misjudged the effects of the drug.

The PCs arrive when the spread of the drug Green Welcome has reached its height and is beginning to have an unexpected result on its users—a horrid transformation. A rash of disappearances and strange plant-like creatures suddenly appearing in town provides PCs the opportunity to chase down the spriggans responsible. Their chase takes them into the sewers and caves beneath the city where the spriggans have made their lair. The PCs must confront the spriggan gang in cramped tunnels infested with many hazards and traps. Conflict with the drug dealers eventually culminates in a confrontation with the soul-eater spriggan, Rakeri.

By successfully defeating the spriggans and destroying their lab, the PCs can ensure that the citizens of Exag are free of the influence of the Green Welcome and Rakeri's life-draining attacks, but are left with unanswered questions about the source of the drug itself and the identity of the mysterious Sehan.

Adventure Hooks

The adventure begins when the PCs arrive in Exag and visit with the city's only innkeeper, Ahmed Hissar Hassan. Here are a few ways to get the PCs involved:

- Abby Starbottom (see "Exag: City of Clay"), an altruistic gnome merchant, asks the party to investigate strange events in the city: drug abuse and monsters appearing inside the city walls. She gives them directions to Hassan's Guesthouse and tells them that he has more information. The party may have been her guards on a recent trip, or she may encounter them on her way back to Perrenland.
- An emaciated human woman approaches the party in the wilderness. She claims, in halting Common, that she fled Exag to escape the strange possession that had come over her family. "The Crafters could not protect us from an evil that comes from within!" she cries. If the party agrees to help, she leads them to Ahmed.
- Voorman Hugelrote of Perrenland hires the PCs to deliver a message to his son Bertram, Perrenland's ambassador to Exag. He has not heard from his son for months and fears that evil may have

befallen him. Voorman reluctantly confides that Bertram has not always acted in the family's best interests. When the PCs arrive, they find Bertram unconscious in Hassan's Guesthouse, clutching an empty vial containing traces of Green Welcome.

CHAPTER ONE: A GREEN WELCOME

More strangers visit Exag every year. Some come to see it after hearing of its wonders, marveling at its high clay walls and exotic buildings. Others hope to uncover some insight into its origins—who built it and why? None are turned away, though Exag's suspicious Flan locals anxiously watch all visitors.

As the PCs approach, read or paraphrase the following.

Exag rises from the surrounding hills, ancient and filled with mystery. Tall walls of red baked clay surround it on all sides. Within the walls, multi-storied buildings of the same clay rise high into the air around large pyramids and a plaza dominated by an immense cistern. An aqueduct feeding the cistern stretches off into the hills.

While the city could hold several thousand, most of it appears unoccupied. Brown-skinned locals in homespun, often clay-stained clothing mingle with visitors in the wide plaza at the end of the packed dirt road that leads through the city gates. A few tend gardens planted in soil packed onto low rooftops, but most of them stand at the edge of the plaza and stare at the new arrivals with suspicion and resentment.

When the PCs enter the city, a throng of street urchins surrounds them, offering their skills as guides. Some of them carry vials of faintly glowing green liquid, which they offer for 50 gp. The vials contain Green Welcome, "a pleasant aphrodisiac that brings peace of mind, strengthens the body, alleviates pain and aches, and fills the heart with unwavering courage." Any of them are happy to lead the PCs to Hassan's Guesthouse.

Hassan's Guesthouse

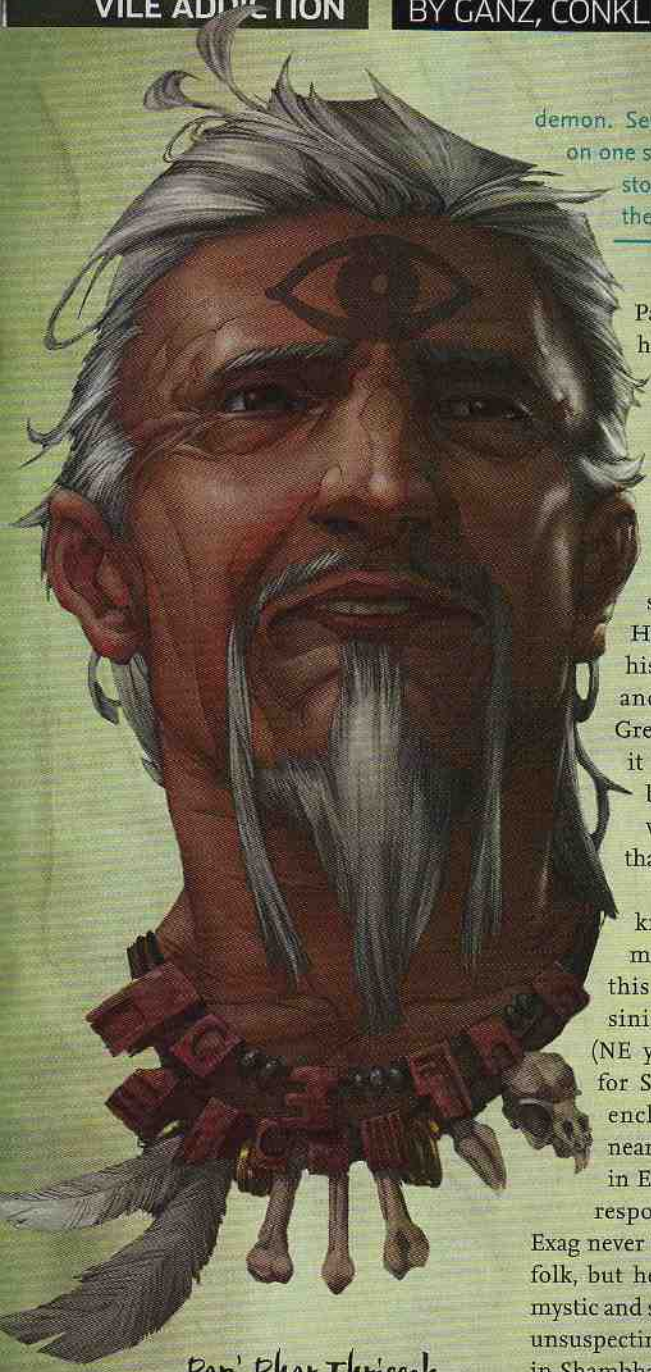
Ahmed Hissar Hassan served as a harem guard until convicted of certain "indiscretions," at which point he fled Ekbir and drifted to the Mounds of Dawn, where he found a new way to make a living. He runs the only inn, tavern, and guesthouse in Exag, catering to the non-citizen travelers and soldiers who stop here out of necessity. Hassan serves rather spartan meals because he frequently runs out of supplies. Guests can pay with foodstuffs and drink; Hassan will credit them with double the food's value for their stay. Hassan has six double-occupancy rooms, furnished with crude, comfortable cots and footlockers. He charges 1 gp per night per guest. That fee includes a very light breakfast of winter wheat gruel and a dinner stew of whatever he has managed to scrape together.

As an outsider, Ahmed feels a great deal of compassion for the locals, and running this inn allows him to help them as much as he can. Although the oppressive control exercised by the city leaders, coupled with the citizens' extreme xenophobia, makes change difficult, he is slowly (and covertly) educating some of the city's youth about the outside world. Although discovery would mean immediate expulsion from the city (or worse), he nevertheless remains popular with the townsfolk, and commands a great deal of influence.

Recently, Ahmed became gravely concerned by the appearance of a new drug on the streets, Green Welcome. While drugs and other forms of escape are nothing new in Exag, in just a few short weeks Green Welcome has become so widespread that it's now impossible to walk down a street without seeing two or three figures slumped on the side of the road, euphoric smiles plastered across their faces. The situation is so bad that the city's food production (already stretched thin), is starting to suffer, leading to shortages. No one is starving yet, but they will soon. Coupled with the highly addictive nature of the drug, Ahmed foresees widespread famine unless the source can be found and eliminated.

When the PCs arrive, Ahmed begs them to do whatever they can to track down the source of Green Welcome and destroy it. The suppliers are believed to be a gang of gnomes, and although they must have a base of operations somewhere within the city walls, no one seems to know where they are or how they move around. Although the drug can be purchased on just about any street corner, the main vendor is a merchant named Pan'phar Thrissek, and Ahmed tells them that his shop, The Mystic Eye, is a good place to start. He tells the PCs that outsiders are not welcome in Exag, and warns them to watch their steps.

Finally, he informs the PCs that strange and terrifying monsters have been reported sulking inside the walls at night.



Pan' Phar Thrissek

While he is inclined to dismiss these reports as the hallucinations of addled junkies, he nevertheless advises caution.

The Mystic Eye (EL 8)

Incense burning in censers fills the dark parlor with thick smoke and heady aromas. Carvings and curios clutter the shelves, while candles provide dim illumination. A cloth-covered table dominates the main room. On it sits a crystal ball nestled in a stand depicting the clawed hand of a demon. Several mismatched chairs sit on one side of the table while a single stout, ladder-backed chair sits on the other.

Creature: This is where Pan'phar Thrissek lives with his servant Alyah. He can sell the PCs any liquid concoction listed in the *Player's Handbook*, and also has a few vials of Green Welcome for sale. As the "official" source of the drug, he charges more than the standard street thug (60 gp). He makes no attempt to hide his main source of income, and extols the virtues of Green Welcome, claiming that it "purifies the mind, while bringing the soul in tune with the vast cosmic force that underlies all life."

Behind the Pan'phar's all-knowing guise lurks a far more cunning being. Within this human shell dwells the sinister Arghakot Annapuma (NE yak folk sorcerer 5). A spy for Shambhala-na, the yak folk enclave hidden deep in the nearby Yatil Mountains, his task in Exag is twofold. His primary responsibility is to ensure that Exag never becomes a threat to the yak folk, but he also uses the façade of a mystic and sometime guide to lure away unsuspecting citizens of Exag to slavery in Shambhala-na. At first he dismissed the recent drug wave as nothing more than a fad. But when he obtained a sample of Green Welcome and discovered its transformative properties, he became far more interested. He managed to contact Rakeri and agreed to sell the drug for him, hoping he could use his relationship with the fey to uncover the source of the powerful elixir. Recently, his efforts paid off, and he managed to capture a Sehan cultist himself. From him, he learned about Sehan, the true source, and the location of the cult. As the adventure begins, he is preparing to leave Exag to journey to the cultist's stronghold, and is looking for a way to eliminate Rakeri, as he believes the spriggan is becoming a liability and gaining too much power in Exag.

Pan'phar's servant Alyah appears to be a young female desert nomad, but is actually a jann.

Pan'phar Thrissek (aka Arghakot Annapuma) CR 7

NE Medium body melded yak folk sorcerer 5
Monster Manual II 200
Init +4; **Senses** Listen +5, Spot +5
Languages Common, Draconic, Flan

AC 9, touch 9, flat-footed 9
hp 14 (10 HD)
Fort +2, **Ref** +4, **Will** +11

Spd 30 ft.
Melee *staff of charming* +8/+3 (1d6)
Base Atk +7; **Grp** +7
Atk Options Power Attack
Special Actions *body meld* (DC 24)
Combat Gear *staff of charming* (37 charges)
Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 5th; +7 melee touch, +6 ranged touch):
2nd (5/day)—*detect thoughts* (DC 17), *minor image* (DC 17)
1st (8/day)—*identify*, *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *shield*
0 (6/day)—*daze* (DC 15), *detect magic*, *mage hand*, *read magic*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 15)

Abilities Str 10, Dex 9, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 20
SQ command genie, summon familiar, use staff
Feats Alertness, Extend Spell, Improved Initiative, Negotiator*, Persuasive*, Power Attack, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Knowledge [local])*, Weapon Focus (staff)
Skills Bluff +14*, Concentration +10, Diplomacy +18*, Disguise +13 (+15 acting), Intimidate +16*, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (history) +9*, Knowledge (local) +12*, Profession (fortune teller) +10*, Sense Motive +12*, Spellcraft +14, Use Magic Device +12
Possesions combat gear, *ring of mind shielding*, *ring of protection +2*

Body Meld (Sp) Once per day a yak folk can merge its body with that of a human, elf, dwarf, half-orc, or any creature of the giant type. Except where noted here, this power functions like a *magic jar* spell heightened to 9th level (caster

level 20th). To use this ability, the yak folk must touch the intended target for 20 minutes without interruption. At the end of this period, the target must make a DC 24 Will save to resist the effect. On a failed save, the host's mind becomes unconscious, and the yak folk assumes control. The yak folk physically merges its body with the victim's body without use of an intermediate vessel. Body meld lasts until dispelled or dismissed.

The yak folk shares all the victim's knowledge, memories, skills, feats, and extraordinary abilities, but none of its spell-like or supernatural abilities. The yak folk retains all of its own supernatural and spell-like abilities. The merging does not shed a magical aura (so a *detect magic* spell does not reveal it), but a *true seeing* spell reveals the victim's dual nature.

If the host body is slain, the yak folk dies with it. When the effect ends (either because the host is slain, the effect is dispelled, or the yak folk wishes to end it), it takes 10 minutes for the bodies to seperate. The host regains consciousness 1d6 minutes after the separation is complete.

Only characters who know the victim personally have any chance of realizing something is wrong, by making a Spot check opposed by the yak folk's Disguise check (which in this case represents how well the yak folk impersonates its host).

Command Genie (Su) Once per day, a yak folk can summon and command a jann of evil alignment, but it can never have more than one jann under its control at one time. The jann is a slave bound to serve until the second sunrise after the summoning.

Use Staff (Ex) A yak folk can use any magic staff. This ability is similar to the Use Magic Device skill except that it applies only to magic staffs and the yak folk does not require a skill check.

*These feats and skills belong to Pan'phar Thrissek; Arghakot Annapuma's body meld ability allows him to use them.

Alyah: hp 33; *Monster Manual* 116.

Treasure: A metal box hidden under the table in Pan'phar's parlor (Search DC 20) contains six vials of Green Welcome plus 35 pp, 23 gp, 20 sp, and three pearls worth 100 gp each (material components for *identify*). The crystal ball is non-magical, but is worth 150 gp with its decorative stand.

Development: If the PCs seem like a capable group that is looking to stop the infestation of Green Welcome at any cost, and don't seem interested in its source, he agrees to provide them with the location of Rakeri's hideout in exchange for 250 gp. If they seem curious about the nature of the drug, or ask questions about how it works, he claims not to know where the "gnomes" hide, but hints that it may be in the sewers. For an additional 250, he also tells them of a back alley where the gnomes frequently meet dealers to sell drugs. By giving the PCs indirect information, he hopes to gain enough time to reach the cultists' hideout and obtain a sample of the source for himself before the PCs reach Rakeri.

In either case, Pan'phar leaves Exag shortly after the PCs' visit, headed toward the mountains.

The Deal (EL 5)

You should run this encounter if Pan'phar sends the PCs chasing after a drug dealer. You can also use it as a random city encounter, or simply to add some flavor to the PCs' investigation.

In the shadow of a ruined building, two dark figures are engaged in furtive conversation. One is fairly tall, and wears clothing typical of the Exag locals. The other stands just over two feet tall and is wearing a chain shirt. They exchange two items, then quickly walk off in opposite directions.

Creatures: The PCs have just witnessed a drug deal between a spriggan named Kurasi and a young local named Tarig (NE male human commoner 1). The PCs can follow either one of them. Kurasi has become complacent after weeks of little opposition, and assuming they can avoid being spotted while they follow him, the PCs can tail him all the way back to his hideout. If the PCs threaten him, Kurasi surrenders

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Dark Green - Diseased, Cursed
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at once. If successfully Intimated or bribed (350 gp), he agrees to lead the PCs back to the hideout, where he attempts to feed them to the lifeleech otyugh. If the PCs lose Kurasi, they can use Track to follow him back to his lair with a DC 23 Survival check.

If the PCs follow Tarig, they can stop him a short distance away. The excited local just received Green Welcome for the first time. He refuses to discuss the deal with the PCs and tries to hide the drug vial. If the PCs press the young man, he attempts to flee. He knows little of the drug or its effects, but he is eager to try it out and resents the PCs' interference. Any other locals side with Tarig, and the PCs could have an angry mob on their hands if they aren't careful.

KURASI, SPRIGGAN GANG MEMBER CR 5
Spriggan rogue 2
CE Small fey
Fiend Folio 162
Init +9; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +6, Spot –1
Languages Common, Gnome, Sylvan

AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 15
hp 31 (7 HD)
Fort +2, **Ref** +12, **Will** +3; evasion

Spd 20 ft.
Melee mwk short sword +11 (1d4/19–20)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** –1
Atk Options sneak attack +4d6
Special Actions size change
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th; +9 melee touch, +9 ranged touch):
At will—*produce flame*, *scare* (DC 12), *shatter* (DC 12)

Abilities Str 10, Dex 20, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 9, Cha 11
SQ trapfinding
Feats Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (short sword)
Skills Climb +5, Disable Device +7, Hide +14, Listen +6, Move Silently +10, Open Lock +12, Sleight of Hand +10, Tumble +13
Possessions chain shirt, masterwork short sword

Size Change (Su): At will, the spriggan can change size to a Large creature. A spriggan cannot use sneak attack or any of his spell-like abilities while he is enlarged. The spriggan's statistics change as follows:

Init +7
AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 13
hp 52 (7 HD)
Fort +5, **Ref** +10, **Will** +3; evasion
Spd 30 ft.
Melee mwk short sword +8 (1d8+4)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Grp +11
Abilities Str 18, Dex 16, Con 18
Skills Climb +9, Disable Device +4, Hide +4, Move Silently +8, Open Lock +10, Sleight of Hand +8, Tumble +11

Development: If the PCs succeed in acquiring the drug, they can study the sample, learning most of what is found in the drug sidebar if they succeed on a DC 25 Craft (alchemy) check or take the risks involved in actually imbibing it.

If the PCs decide to search the sewers, refer to section one of the spriggan hideout in Chapter Two for encounters. It is possible for the PCs to stumble upon the entrance into their cavernous hideout at area 4.

The Horrible Plant Thing (EL 8)

At some point after the PCs begin their investigation, but before they enter the

sewers, you should run this event to emphasize the cost of failure for the people of Exag.

A crowd of locals gathers near a building where something writhes and squirms in the street. Above their screams and horrified gasps, the creature emits wet smacking sounds as it flops around on the ground. With a horrible gurgling ululation the thing lurches to its feet on two thick, twisted humanoid legs of ropy vines covered in slime. Its torso, arms, and head are likewise slime-covered and plantlike. As it shambles forward the locals, they grow strangely calm and lethargic.

Creature: This creature is the result of an overdose of Green Welcome. Once a simple hunter, weeks of addiction to Green Welcome has transformed this man's body into something resembling the alien roots of the Sehan secretions.

Child of Sehan: hp 82; see Appendix.

Tactics: All traces of humanity have been washed away by this monstrous transformation. Confused and frightened, the creature lashes out madly at anyone it can see. Treat the child of Sehan as though under the effects of a *confusion* spell. A result that would normally cause it to flee or act normally results in the creature heading toward the city gates and out into the surrounding hills.

Development: If allowed to flee, this creature leaves the city and enters the ancient necropolis Cair Pahoran several miles outside of Exag, the focus of the second installment in this campaign arc: "Spawn of Sehan."

CHAPTER TWO: THE SPRIGGAN HIDEOUT

Rakeri and his cronies have taken over a series of caves adjacent to Exag's ancient sewer system, which is as old as the city itself. Cleansed of the wererats that had been living there, the network of caves provided the perfect combination of security, isolation, and convenience to set up his drug lab and begin putting together his plan to dominate Exag.

Cavern Features

With the exceptions of areas 3, 7, 8, and 11, the height of these natural caverns average 10–12 feet. The spriggans that live here use *produce flame* spells for light, along with the occasional torch, so in general the caves are completely dark. Small rivulets of water flow down the walls and a putrid reek permeates the air.

Some areas of this cave complex have narrow tunnels, low ceilings, or both. Areas 7 and 8 have low ceilings, while the tunnel connecting areas 8a and 10 is very narrow. Medium creatures must squeeze to pass through these areas, while Large creatures must make a DC 30 Escape Artist check.

1. Old Sewers

A secret passage (Search DC 20) leads from the northwest corner of the Great Pyramid above down to this area of the sewers. The spriggans use this passage to come and go from their nearby lair.

The narrow shaft descends twenty feet through the darkness before widening out into the sewers. Iron rungs fixed into the side of the shaft continue down the wall to the floor. Wide walkways line either side of a five-foot-deep sewage canal filled with rancid water. A small opening in the northeastern wall leads down into darkness, while a massive iron grate blocks off the passageway to the south. The entire area is strewn with garbage, and the scuffling of rats is clearly audible in the distance. The smells of garbage and offal are overpowering.

The sewer beyond the grate might contain alligators, rat swarms, roving packs of ghouls, wraiths, or greater shadows, but further exploration of the ancient sewer system under Exag's streets is beyond the scope of this adventure. On the eastern side's southern ledge, a small break in the wall leads into a narrow tunnel that descends below the sewers.

Iron Grate: 2 in. thick; hp 60; Hardness 10; Break DC 24.

2. Down the Narrow Tunnel

This glistening two-foot-wide tunnel descends further into the darkness at a steep angle. The sewer stench seems even worse down this passage.

This restrictive tunnel is only 4 feet high and should serve as a hint of what the PCs can expect below in the spriggans' caves. The tunnel descends 20 feet below the sewer level. If the PCs make no attempt at stealth, the spriggan guard in room 3 may hear them (Listen +6) and run to areas 7 and 8 to warn his fellows.

The slick, smooth walls of this steeply sloping tunnel can be precarious for Medium or smaller creatures. Moving down this passage requires a DC 15 Climb check. Failure by 5 or more results in the PC slipping down the tunnel to area 3 and taking 1d6 points of nonlethal damage from colliding with the walls along the way.

3. Talking Garbage (EL 8)

An unbearable stench fills the room. Putrid water flows from the walls of this large cavern into a huge pit in the center of the cave. A shaft of light from the ceiling shines down on the pit, which holds glistening piles of all sorts of foul refuse dropped from above. The water oozing down the walls trickles into the pit, mingling with the slimy mound of garbage. A heap of rubble along the southern wall climbs to a gaping hole near the ceiling.

Any creature that enters this cave must make a DC 14 Fortitude save or be sickened for 1d4 minutes. A creature that successfully saves is immune to this effect, even if he leaves and comes back later.

This cavern is approximately 15 feet high. A DC 25 Spot check or a DC 12 Survival check by a PC with the Track feat reveals small humanoid footprints around the eastern edge of the pit. The footprints also reveal that the small creatures that left them can apparently traverse this room without having to fight the Creature. Downward sloping tunnels lead to areas 5 and 7.

The large hole in the south wall 15 feet above the ground has a lot of rubble in front of it. Strange, slimy, stone-eating worms have weakened the wall between areas 3 and 4. The rubble can be climbed with a DC 5 Climb check—actually climbing up the wall into area 4 requires a DC 15 Climb check.

Creatures: PCs that succeed on a DC 18 Spot check notice that part of the mound of garbage in the pit is actually a bloated, ovoid creature with two vine-like eyestalks and four thick tentacles hiding among the filth. A horrid mouth with multiple rows of jagged teeth covers the entire front of the creature. Its rough hide twists and contorts over its strange form, seemingly infused with its own writhing energy.

Rakeri brokered a deal with this lifeleech otyugh that allows the spriggans to move through here freely while it guards this cave. When engaging in combat the creature states, in rumbling Common, "You trespassers. Me *eat* trespassers!"

A spriggan wearing leather armor and armed with a club hides in the shadows in the tunnel to area 5 (Spot DC 34). He is the "keeper" of the rust monsters in area 5.

LIFELEECH OTYUGH **CR 8**

NE Large aberration

Monster Manual III 119

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +10, Spot +10

Languages Common

AC 21, touch 16, flat-footed 18

hp 90 (9 HD); fast healing 5

Fort +9, **Ref** +6, **Will** +12

Spd 40 ft.

Melee 4 tentacles +14 (1d8+8) and bite +8 (1d6+4)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +18

Atk Options Combat Reflexes, constrict 1d8+8, improved grab

Abilities Str 27, Dex 16, Con 23, Int 7, Wis 18, Cha 6

SQ lifeleech aura, spell-strengthened hide

Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Iron Will, Weapon Focus (tentacle)

Skills Listen +10, Spot +10, Hide +3 (+8 in its lair), Jump +12

Lifeleech Aura (Su) Whenever a spell or spell-like ability with the healing descriptor is used on a creature within 60 feet of a lifeleech otyugh, the otyugh gains the benefit of the healing spell as if it had been one of the spell's targets. If a healing spell cast within 60 feet of a lifeleech otyugh would grant it enough hit points to exceed its full normal total, it gains the remaining hit points as temporary hit points. A lifeleech otyugh can't have more temporary hit points from its lifeleech aura than its full normal hit point total. Temporary hit points gained in this manner last for one hour. This ability affects spell completion and spell trigger items (such as scrolls, staves and wands), but not other magic items.

Spell-Strengthened Hide (Su) The sickly gray skin of a lifeleech otyugh is infused with magical energy. This strange energy grants a lifeleech otyugh a +4 deflection bonus to its AC.

Skills A lifeleech otyugh has a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always

choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

Spriggan Gang Member: hp 31; AC 17; Hide +16, Move Silently +12; small club +6 (1d4); see page 34.

Tactics: The otyugh uses its reach and Combat Reflexes feat to grab and constrict its foes until they stop squirming. It uses the hole in the south wall to try to escape if the fight goes badly. As soon as the spriggan hears or sees the party approaching, he hurries to areas **8** and **9** to warn his comrades.

4. The Sewers

This area is identical to the entry caves, except that the broken iron grate here gives way to the tunnels behind it. Dried slime covers the floor, forming a trail through the garbage.

A PC with the Track feat may make a DC 20 Survival check to notice that the dried slime on the floor came from a snail-like creature. The lifeleech otyugh in area **3** uses this route to enter the sewers.

5. The Rusty Cave (EL 4)

The foul oder in this cavern is mixed with a metallic tang. A wooden pole has been driven into the cave floor on the northeast side of the room, with a passageway opening behind it.

Creatures: Three rust monsters have been tied to the wooden pole with stout rope. Rakeri captured them when they entered the hideout two weeks ago. He ordered them bound here while unconscious, and the spriggan from area **3** is responsible for their care. Since the rust monsters are restricted in their movement to the area just in front of the entrance to area **8**, the EL for this encounter is lower than it should be.

Rust Monsters (3): hp 30 each; *Monster Manual* 216.

Tactics: If the player characters come within 15 feet of the rust monsters, the beasts attempt to "eat" any metal objects carried or worn by the party, tugging at their rope leashes to get at them. The rust monsters have enough slack to move up to 15 feet from the pole until the sturdy hemp rope stops their progress. They can burst the rope with a DC 15 Strength check, but they won't try unless they start taking fire or a particularly juicy morsel (like a suit of plate mail) walks into the room.

6. Were-Remnants (EL 8)

This cave smells of garbage and death. A heap of bodies lies against the far wall. The only identifiable one appears to be a small, gnome-like creature, surrounded by animal parts with fur, a human head, and a twisted, humanoid looking claw. A furry carpet of yellow-brown mold covers all of the bodies except the small one.

The remains of the spriggans and wererats who fell during the battle for the lair have been dumped here.

Traps: There are two separate dungeon hazards here—an unstable ceiling and a patch of yellow mold.

The tunnel between areas **3** and **6** has structural problems caused by small green stone-eating worms that have weakened the walls and ceiling of this area. Allow careful PCs a DC 20 Knowledge (architecture and engineering) or Craft (stonemasonry) to alert them to the structural damage and threat of a collapse. Otherwise, make a DC 20 Spot for PCs to notice tiny bits of stone dropping occasionally from the ceiling.

There's a 50% chance that the ceiling collapses if more than three PCs walk through this area at the same time, as the vibrations caused by their passage are the catalyst for a cave-in. If fewer than three PCs walk through this area simultaneously, the chance is reduced to 25%. An explosion in the laboratory (see area **8a**) automatically triggers a cave-in. Characters standing below the cave-in suffer 8d6 points of damage (DC 15 Reflex save for half damage). They are subsequently buried, taking 1d6 points of non-lethal damage every minute until uncovered.

A yellow mold colony covers the bones of the wererats (see *Dungeon Master's Guide* 76).

Treasure: A Search (DC 15) reveals a small, bright golden ring on the finger of one of the dead bodies—a *ring of evasion.*

7. Deadly Crawlspace (EL Variable)

This tunnel is very small. A slight breeze carrying the scent of clean air comes from the passage.

Medium creatures must squeeze to pass through this passage.

If Bilgor and his crew (see area **9** below) are on alert, two of them man the murderholes that open into this tunnel. If the PCs attempt to pass through it, the spriggans stab at them with longspears through the murderholes.

8. On Dangerous Ground (EL variable)

The ceiling in this chamber is only a few feet above the ground, making the cave feel cramped despite its large size. The air in this chamber is fresh and clean, a stark contrast to the putrid sewer, and smells faintly of mineral water.

The ceiling in the northern half of this cave is 4 feet high. The floor of the cave descends to the pool in the south where the ceiling is 7 feet above the surface of the water. The water in the pool is safe to drink. An underwater tunnel leads to area **8a**. PCs may make a DC 20 Spot check to notice a rope secured to a stone near the small tunnel to area **10** and a dim light coming from what appears to be a tunnel under the surface of the water. Bedrolls line the eastern wall.

Creatures: Seven spriggans (five males and two females) use this cave as their sleeping quarters. Their numbers may be reduced if the characters killed Kurasi or the spriggan in area **3**. If all seven spriggans are here, this is an EL 11 encounter.

Spriggan Gang Members (7): hp 31 each; see page 34.

Tactics: Four spriggans hide in the shadows when the PCs enter the cave

THE BIG BANG

Area **8a** holds the potential for disaster. The rock gnomes have unwittingly built their dangerously unstable machinery against a wall that is only a thin barrier between this cave and an underground river. A battle in this room has the potential of setting off a ticking time bomb that would open up the wall and flood this cave and the adjoining caverns.

Malfunctioning Machinery and Flood Hazard (CR 8): The machinery in the northeast corner of the cave is a fragile collection of interconnected pressure tubes, spinning gears, vats, and steam-filled cylinders that only the gnomes know how to operate. If they are jostled roughly, it causes a cascade malfunction, and the entire contraption explodes 2d4+2 rounds later. Any creature in area **8a** when the machinery explodes takes 3d6 points of slashing damage and 3d6 points of fire damage from the explosion. A DC 20 Reflex save reduces the damage by half.

Making matters worse, the wall behind the machinery cracks open, causing a flood of water to spray into the room. It takes the water 1d3 minutes to collapse the weakened wall, which causes a wall of water to move through the adjoining caves. A *make whole* or *stone shape* spell cast on the wall during this time can seal the breach and prevent the collapse. When the wall gives way, each PC must succeed on a DC 15 Swim or Strength check each round to resist being swept away in the fast-moving water, taking 1d6 points of lethal damage as they are pummelled against the cave floor and walls, or 1d3 non-lethal if successful.

In 4 rounds, area **8a** is completely submerged in water, and in 1 minute most of area **8**, **9**, and **10** are also filled. Creatures caught in the flood are at risk of being swept away via the shortest route to the chasm at area **11**, which presents its own perils.

See "Water Dangers and Drowning" on page 304 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for more information about being swept away in fast moving water.

while the other three attempt to circle around them and attack from behind. The spriggans retreat to area **9** if they take heavy casualties. They take prisoners if possible (to use in Sehan experiments).

Development: Captured PCs are eventually taken to area **8a**, where they are subjected to the ministrations of the apotheosis apparatus and analyzed by the gnome alchemists.

Treasure: One of the spriggans uses a +2 *human-bane short sword*, and among the spriggans' belongings the PCs can find a *ring of the ram* (24 charges).

8a. Secret Laboratory (EL 8)

The steady sound of bubbling, puffing, clanking, coughing, and grinding mechanical gears fills this vast hidden cavern. Dozens of alchemical substances compete to fill the air with powerful odors. A huge laboratory bench is packed with glassware containing green powders, pastes, and oily liquids.

Against the north wall a large mechanical apparatus seems to be the source of all the noise, steaming and puffing incessantly while pumping green liquid through its pipes and tubes. Near this apparatus, a second mechanical device stands next to the wall, vaguely humanoid in shape. Its torso contains a large barrel of thick glass capped with iron at both ends. Long, flexible arms protrude from it, ending in three finger-like clamps with green glass lenses on each "palm." The contraption stands atop four legs and is filled with a foamy, glowing green substance.

Rakeri ordered these gnomes and their mechanical devices abducted from their enclave in Perrenland several weeks ago. He wanted these gnomes because of their skills in alchemy. After having them build a working lab here, he keeps them busy studying Sehan in order to find a way to reproduce variations of it. When he has found a way to produce Green Welcome without the samples he keeps stealing, he intends to destroy the Cult of Sehan.

Creatures: Jebetto, Golbak, Royell, and Zook (N male gnome expert 5) are all non-combative gnomes. If threatened, they cower or try to escape. The real threat to the PCs is the glass barrel-bodied contraption—the apotheosis apparatus. The glass barrel in its torso has been alchemically treated to make it as hard as steel. The lenses in its palms are its eyes. The foam inside it is a chemical derived from Sehan that is still in its experimental stage. Rakeri knows that his plans will be ruined if an army of transformed creatures destroys the city above, so he is looking for a variation of the drug that will allow him to control the monsters. So far, the chemicals have only caused test subjects to sicken and die.

Gnome Alchemists (4): hp 19 each; Int 14; *Monster Manual* 131

APOTHEOSIS APPARATUS **CR 8**

N Large construct

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +0, Spot +0

AC 21; touch 9; flat-footed 21

hp 102 (16 HD); DR 5/adamantine

Immune construct traits

Fort +5, **Ref** +5, **Will** +5

Spd 30 ft.

Melee 2 slams +17 (1d8+6)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +22

Atk Options encapsulate, improved grab

Special Actions poison

Abilities Str 22, Dex 10, Con —, Int —; Wis 11; Cha 1

Encapsulate (Ex) If the apparatus has grappled an opponent at least 1 size category smaller than it, a metal iris at the top of its cylindrical torso opens (a free action) and it places the creature inside this space with a successful grapple check. The metal iris then closes, trapping the creature inside. The apparatus is no longer considered grappled once it has encapsulated an opponent. The trapped creature may escape with a DC 30 Strength check to pry the metal iris open or by dealing 25 points of damage to the inside of its transparent iron hull (which shares the construct's DR).

Poison (Ex) The foamy substance inside the apotheosis apparatus is a potent poison. Contact; Fort DC 20; initial and secondary 1d6 Con/2d6 Con. After initial

contact with the poison, victims need not keep making saving throws every round. However, they still must make their save against its secondary effect 1 minute later.

Tactics: The apotheosis apparatus animates during the PCs' conversation with the gnomes and attempts to grapple the nearest PC. The construct is still in "chemical testing mode," and if it encapsulates a PC, the apparatus expels him after 3 rounds of exposure to the chemicals and chooses another target, repeating this tactic until all of the characters have been exposed. It then shuts down at the center of the cave until new "test subjects" enter. The rock gnomes are safe from attacks from the apparatus. It was originally their creation, but Rakeri has perverted its use.

Treasure: The PCs can find 10 vials of Green Welcome in the lab. If the equipment can be dismantled and transported to a buyer, it can be sold for as much as 4,000 gp.

Development: If the gnomes become friendly toward the PCs (initial attitude indifferent), they may reveal details about the Sehan drug. They are not aware of its origins, but they do know its properties and effects on users. The gnomes are in bad shape, get little to eat, and are low on hit points. The leader of the rock gnomes is Jebetto.

If at any point during the encounter the apotheosis apparatus enters a square adjacent to the machinery in the northeastern corner of the cave, it clumsily bumps the fragile contraption, triggering events outlined in "The Big Bang" sidebar.

Ad-Hoc XP Award: If the PCs free the gnomes and take them to safety, give them a CR 9 experience award.

9. Bilgor and his Crew (EL 8)

Sleeping mats and small chests are this cave's only furnishings. Tunnels exit from the northeastern and southeastern walls. The western wall has two narrow openings that look into a passageway on the far side of the wall.

Creatures: Rakeri's brother Bilgor, marked by a hideous scar and a ruined left eye, and three other members of the spriggan gang live here.

Spriggan Gang Members (3): hp 31 each; see page 34.

BILGOR CR 7

Male spriggan rogue 4
CE Small fey
Fiend Folio 162
Init +9; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +10, Spot –1
Languages Common, Gnome, Sylvan

AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 15; Dodge, Mobility, uncanny dodge
hp 42 (9 HD)
Fort +3, **Ref** +13, **Will** +4; evasion

Spd 20 ft.
Melee mwk short sword +12 (1d4/19–20)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +1
Atk Options sneak attack +5d6
Special Actions size change
Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th; +10 melee or ranged touch):
At will—*produce flame*, *scare* (DC 12), *shatter* (DC 12)

Abilities Str 10, Dex 21, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 9, Cha 11
SQ trapfinding, trap sense +1
Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Weapon Finesse
Skills Balance +7, Climb +9, Disable Device +10, Hide +18, Jump +2, Listen +10, Move Silently +14, Open Lock +14, Sleight of Hand +14, Spot –1, Tumble +12
Possessions chain shirt, masterwork short sword

Size Change (Su) At will, the spriggan can change size to a Large creature. A spriggan cannot use sneak attack or any of his spell-like abilities while he is enlarged. Bilgor's statistics change as follows:
Init +7
AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 13
hp 54 (9 HD)
Fort +6, **Ref** +11, **Will** +4
Spd 30 ft.
Melee mwk short sword +8 (1d8+4)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Grp +10
Abilities Str 10, Dex 17, Con 18
Skills Balance +5, Climb +13, Disable Device +7, Hide +8, Jump +6, Move Silently +12, Open Lock +12, Sleight of Hand +12, Tumble +10

Tactics: The spriggans here enlarge at their first opportunity and attack. Bilgor stays behind, watching how the fight goes and warning his brother Rakeri. He then retreats to room **10**. Bilgor prefers not to enlarge because he doesn't want to lose his sneak attack ability. If reduced to below 10 hit points, however, he enlarges, grabs the chest with healing potions in it, and flees to area **11** where Rakeri awaits.

Treasure: Scattered about the room are four small beds and three wooden chests with average locks (Open Lock DC 20). The chests hold a total of 40 pp and 500 gp. One of them also contains two *potions of cure moderate wounds*, one *potion of jump*, and one *potion of cure serious wounds*.

10. Rakeri's Cave (EL 10)

A small bed with a straw mattress is pushed up against the western wall of this oddly clean cavern. A small leather-bound book lies next to it. Two large, padlocked wooden chests sit in the middle of the room and a basin with crystal clear water is built into the eastern wall. The withered body of man—an Exag local by the looks of him—lies face down on the cave floor.

Rakeri's second escape tunnel (to area **8**) is similar to area **2**. The body is a recent victim of Rakeri's craving for souls. He was abducted earlier today.

Creature: Unless alerted to the presence of the PCs, Rakeri is here with his dire weasel animal companion Krrgle, torturing a rat while planning his next move to attain his goal of ultimate power. He hasn't gotten around to dumping the corpse yet.

RAKERI CR 11

Male spriggan druid 5/souleater 3
CE Small fey
Fiend Folio 162, *Book of Vile Darkness* 66
Init +9; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +16, Spot +9
Languages Common, Gnome, Sylvan

AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 14

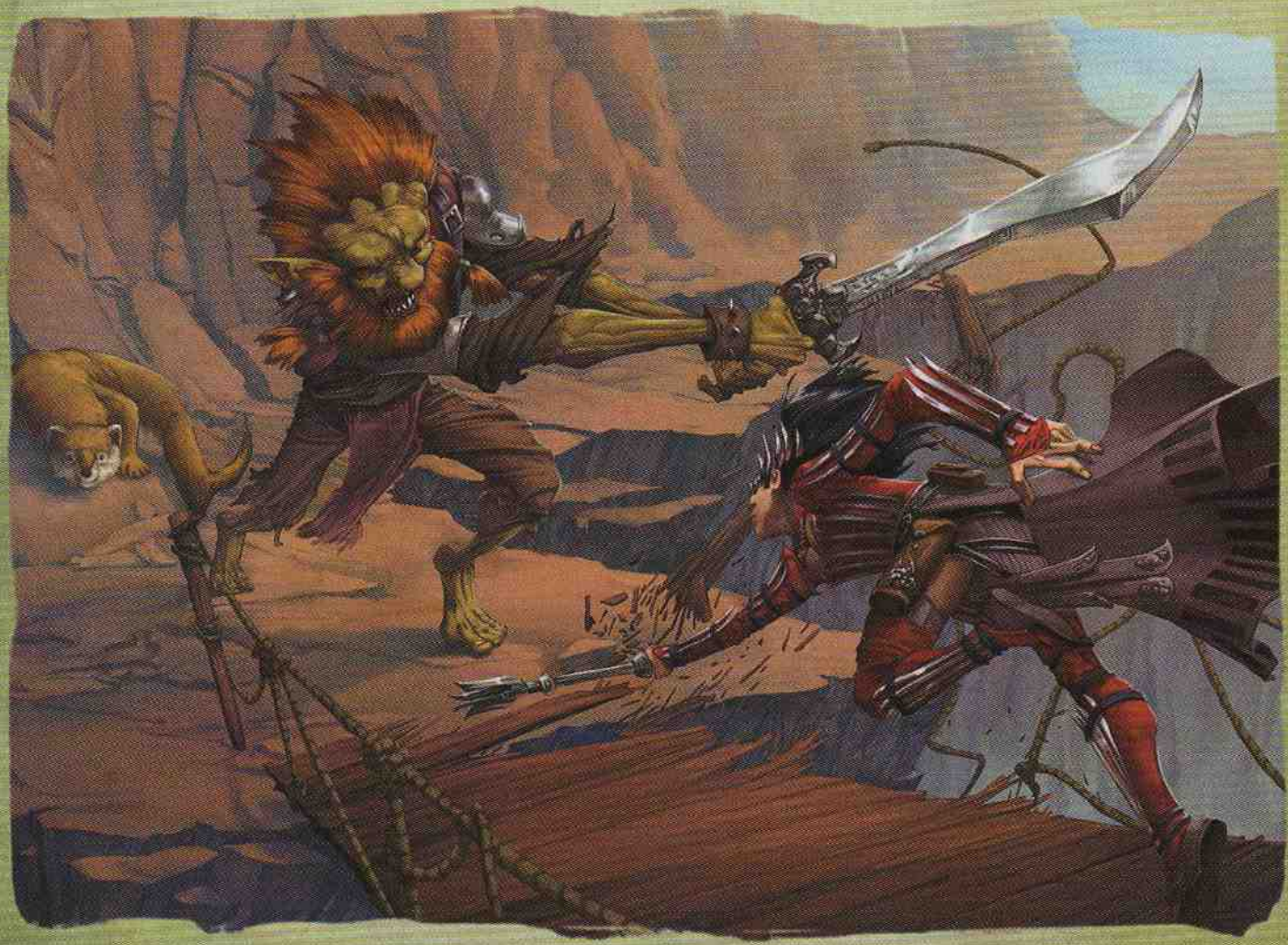
hp 66 (13 HD)
Resist +4 vs. spell-like abilities of fey
Fort +9, **Ref** +13, **Will** +14

Spd 20 ft
Melee +1 *keen short sword* +15 (1d4+2/17–20)
Ranged light crossbow +13 (1d6/19–20)
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +4
Atk Options energy drain, sneak attack +3d6, soul blast
Special Actions size change, wild shape 1/day
Spells Prepared (CL 5th; +13 melee touch)
3rd—*poison* (DC 13)
2nd—*barkskin, cat's grace*
1st—*cure light wounds, entangle* (DC 12), *longstrider, summon nature's ally I*
0—*cure minor wounds, detect poison, flare* (DC 11), *guidance, read magic*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th; +13 melee or ranged touch)
At will—*produce flame, scare* (DC 12), *shatter* (DC 12)

Abilities Str 12, Dex 20, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 11
SQ link, share spells, soul strength, trackless step, wild empathy +5, woodland stride
Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (claw)
Skills Climb +6, Concentration +9, Disable Device +7, Handle Animal +6, Heal +6, Hide +14, Knowledge (nature) +2, Listen +16, Move Silently +10, Open Lock +12, Sleight of Hand +10, Spellcraft +8, Spot +9, Survival (aboveground) +3
Possessions studded leather, +1 *keen short sword*, light crossbow with 12 bolts, small whistle

Energy Drain (Su) Rakeri can drain energy from a victim. His touch bestows one negative level. It can be removed 24 hours later with a DC 16 Fort save.
Soul Blast (Su) Rakeri can project a 100-foot ray of force that deals 3d6 points of damage against a target (DC 13 Reflex save negates). This ability can be used once per day, only on days when he has drained levels.
Size Change (Su): At will, the spriggan can change size to a Large creature. A spriggan cannot use sneak attack or any of his spell-like abilities while he is enlarged. Rakeri's statistics change as follows:
Init +7
AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 13
hp 98 (13 HD)
Fort +12, **Ref** +11, **Will** +12
Spd 30 ft.
Melee +1 *keen short sword* +11 (1d8+5/17–20)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Grp +11
Abilities Str 20, Dex 16, Con 18
Skills Climb +10, Disable Device +4, Hide +4, Move Silently +8, Open Lock +10, Sleight of Hand +8
Soul Strength (Su) When he uses his energy drain ability, Rakeri receives a +4 enhancement bonus to Strength for 24 hours.

Krrgle, Dire Weasel: hp 20; *Monster Manual* 65.



Tactics: Rakeri prepares for battle by casting *barkskin* and *cat's grace* on himself. In combat he uses his *soul blast* first while Krrgle keeps enemies at bay. Thereafter he casts *shatter* on the weapons of any obvious fighters, enlarges himself, and closes with the weakest-looking enemy to grapple or make touch attacks to drain levels. If successful in grappling an opponent he inflicts a negative level with each successful grapple check or attack roll. If reduced to less than half his total hit points he wild shapes into a cheetah and flees to area **11**.

Treasure: A successful DC 10 Search of the two chests reveals that one is watertight and labeled "Lab" in Gnome. This chest was destined for room **8a** and contains 4 small clay jars of Sehan for the gnomes. The other is full of clothes and other worthless personal effects.

Rakeri's journal (the leather-bound tome) is written in Gnome and reveals much of the Adventure Background, with recent entries containing details given in some of the room descriptions (the deal with the lifeleech otyugh, Rakeri's plan to become the drug lord of Exag, the story of how he learned of Sehan). One describes a plan to raid a necropolis just outside the city named Cair Pahoran to steal the source of Sehan from the cult hiding there.

Development: If alerted, Rakeri flees to room **11**, crosses the chasm, and waits behind a rock to attack the PCs.

11. Mind the Gap! (EL 4 or 12)

The tunnel leading to this area descends at a moderate slope.

The descending tunnel opens out into a huge cavern split by a deep crevasse. A rope bridge spans the chasm, supported by thick wooden posts driven into the floor on either side. Obviously intended for small creatures, the bridge looks sturdy nonetheless. A light breeze flows upwards from the chasm, which measures approximately forty feet across.

The tunnel on the far side of the chasm leads deep into the Underdark. Crossing the bridge requires a DC 15 Balance check. The crevasse descends 80 feet before narrowing to a small crack. Falling creatures take normal falling damage, and must make a Reflex save (DC 10 +2 for every 10 feet fallen) or become wedged into the crack. PCs wedged in the crevasse must get help to wriggle free or succeed on a DC 20 Escape Artist check. The ceiling of this cavern is 50 feet high.

Creatures: If Rakeri fled here, he waits for his pursuers behind a rock on the far side of the bridge. When at least one PC is 15 feet across the bridge he fires his crossbow. If a PC gets hit while on the bridge, a Balance check is required to avoid falling off. If Rakeri manages to drop one of the PCs off the bridge with his first shot, he fires a second bolt. After two shots he blows on his whistle, agitating the bats in the cave. He attempts to hold this position as long as possible, but if he is reduced to less that 15 hit

points he uses *produce flame* to light the rope bridge on fire and then flees into the Underdark.

The rope bridge is made of 2-inch-thick hemp rope, strengthened with animal sinew (Hardness 0; 6 hp). If the damage from the flame reduces the rope bridge to 0 hit points, it immediately collapses and any PC on it must make a DC 15 Reflex save to grab hold of a piece of rope still anchored to the east or west side of the chasm or fall. Even if the Reflex save is successful, the PC slams into the fissure wall for 3d6 points of damage and must make a DC 10 Climb check to catch hold of the wall.

If the PCs make any noise louder than normal speech or if Rakeri blows his whistle, it agitates a swarm of bats in the ceiling of the cave. They swarm around the bridge area for 4 rounds before settling back down. PCs on the bridge while the bats are disturbed must make a Balance check as previously described.

Bat Swarm: hp 13; *Monster Manual* 237.

Development: If Rakeri escapes, he hides in this maze for some time before checking what's happening in Exag and eventually re-opening his business.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

By disrupting Rakeri's gang of drug dealers, the PCs stave off the spread of Green Welcome beyond Exag. If the PCs learned about the connection between Sehan and Green Welcome the next logical course of action is to investigate the original source: the Cult of Sehan hidden in the ancient necropolis Cair Pahoran. When they emerge from the sewers they may have to deal with a rash of plant monster appearances in the city (more overdose victims). Though Exag's local warriors kill some of them, any that escape shamble out into the hills head in the direction of the necropolis.

Pan'phar Thrissek is nowhere to be found, but a DC 20 Gather Information check reveals that he was last seen following one of the plant creatures out into the hills in the vicinity of Cair Pahoran.

If the PCs make clear to the clan leaders of Exag that the citizens were being purposely hooked on Green Welcome in order to enslave them, the leaders are grateful and become less standoffish toward the adventurers, perhaps even offering daughters or sons to marry, feasts, and small trinkets (carvings, baskets, paintings, etc.).

PCs who are vocal about their intention to trace the drug back to the necropolis may be able to make a little profit by taking notes and rubbings for some of the local archaeologists and historians residing in Exag.

APPENDIX: NEW MONSTER

Child of Sehan

Covered with a layer of viscous green slime, this humanoid-shaped mass of roots and vines lumbers along with the gait of a drunken man. The fibrous green tendrils that have been woven together to create its form constantly writhe and pulsate in a oddly familiar rhythm. A sickening stench and a faint sloshing sound mark its steady advance, and its eyes glow red.

CHILD OF SEHAN CR 8

Always CE Medium plant

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +11, Spot +11

Languages Common (cannot speak)

Aura calming gaze (DC 21)

AC 26, touch 15, flat-footed 24 (+1 Dex, +4 insight, +11 natural)

hp 82 (11 HD)

Immune acid, plant traits

Fort +10, **Ref** +4, **Will** +8

Spd 30 ft.

Melee 2 claws +14 (1d8+5 plus poison of Sehan)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +13

Atk Options rend 2d6+7

Abilities Str 20, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 6, Wis 18, Cha 6

SQ hive mind, sympathetic defense

Feats Ability Focus (poison), Ability Focus (calming gaze), Power Attack, Weapon Focus (claw)

Skills Listen +8, Spot +8

Environment any (always found near Sehan)

Organization solitary (if newly transformed) or pack (3-4)

Treasure standard

Advancement 12–15 HD (Medium), 16–30 HD (Large)

Calming Gaze (Su) A Child of Sehan is totally in tune with its surroundings, and excludes a supernatural aura of peace and tranquility, even as it rips apart its foes and transforms them into terrifying monsters. Any creature within 120 feet that meets its gaze must make a DC 21 Will save or be affected as though by a *calm emotions* spell (CL equals the Child of Sehan's HD). If the Child of Sehan attacks, it ends this effect for the target of the attack only. This is a mind-affecting compulsion effect, and the save DC is Wisdom-based.

Poison of Sehan (Ex) Injury, Fortitude DC 20. Initial damage 1 Intelligence drain, secondary damage 3d6 Charisma damage. Any humanoid creature reduced to 0 Charisma by this effect immediately undergoes a monstrous transformation into a Child of Sehan over the course of the next 3 rounds, as its sense of self is washed away by the unifying consciousness of Sehan. For the first 4 hours after its transformation, the creature is ripped by intense agony as the master consciousness of Sehan

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

While designed for a group of four 8th-level characters, with a little work "Vile Addiction" can be adapted for use by 6th–7th-level characters or 9th–10th-level characters. Simply adjust all NPC character levels up or down as appropriate by a number equal to the amount the average party level of your group deviates from 8.

6th–7th-level parties: Reduce the number of spriggans in the hideout by one or two for each keyed location. Change the lifeleech otyugh to a normal otyugh. Remove one souleater level from Rakeri. Remove the bat swarm from area 11 and reduce the depth of the crevasse to 60 feet.

9th–10th-level parties: Advance the lifeleech otyugh by 3 to 4 HD. Add two more rust monsters and decrease the DC for them to break free. Add two more spriggans to each area where they are encountered. Give Rakeri a tougher animal companion (a dire wolverine is a good choice). Increase Rakeri's souleater levels.

eliminates all trace of individuality from the former creature. During this time, the new Child of Sehan behaves as if under the effect of an ongoing *confusion* spell, and loses all of its supernatural abilities. Transformation can be halted by *remove disease*, *restoration*, *neutralize poison*, *heal*, or *dispel evil*, but once it is complete only *miracle* or *wish* can reverse it. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Hive Mind (Su) The Children of Sehan share a unified consciousness with their master Sehan and its other children. This consciousness extends out to a 25-mile radius from Sehan itself. Within that range, if one Child is aware of a paticular danger, they all are. If one in a group is not flat-footed, none of them are. No Child of Sehan in a group is considered flanked unless they all are. Beyond the range of the hive mind, individual Children of Sehan can still sense the direction of their master, and are compelled to reach it as soon as possible.

Sympathetic Defense (Su) A Child of Sehan gains an insight bonus to its AC equal to its Wisdom bonus.

Created by exposure to the horrifying essence of the Far Realm, the Child of Sehan represents the terrifying culmination of "oneness with the universe." Without a trace of individuality, the Children of Sehan are little more than additional appendages for the thing that lurks at the center of the insidious web. Its plans are as unfathomable as the chaos that spawned it, and just as terrifying.

The effects of Sehan upon creatures other than humanoids are unknown, although it seems likely that such creatures would be similarly transformed by contact with it.

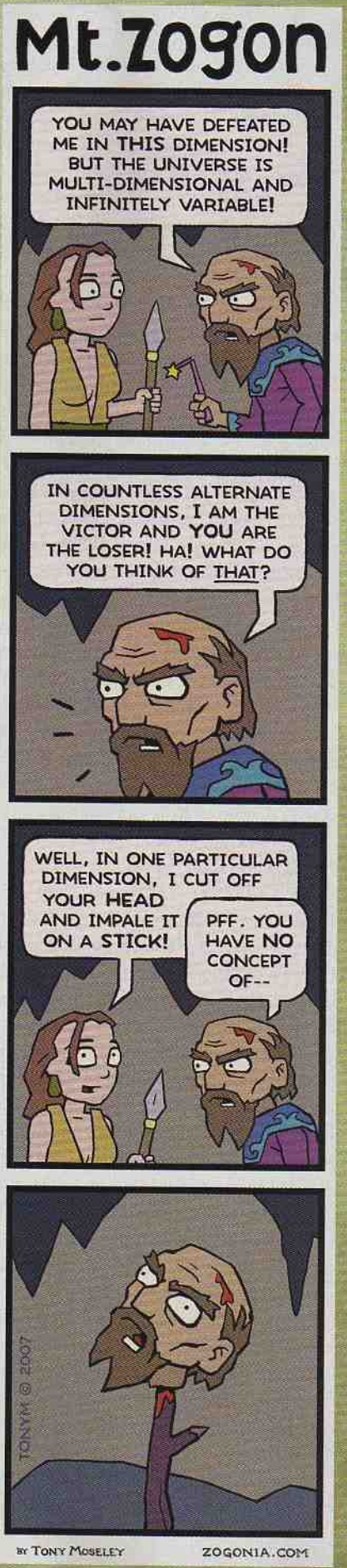
Tom Ganz (Dryder from the Paizo messageboards) writes: "It was great working together with these great authors and I hope to meet them one day at Gen Con face-to-face! Thank you guys so much for jumping in on this idea. I'd like to thank my wife Veronica for giving me the freedom to play my favorite game as often as I find the time."

Stephen S. Greer would like to thank playtesters Stanley Cramer, Dan Dekker, Ken Crawford, Bill LaChapelle, and John Bacon for working out the bugs in Seeds of Sehan. Oh, and long live the apotheosis apparatus!

B. Matt Conklin III has previously seen print in DUNGEON *#126's "The Menagerie," which won the 2005 Origins/*DUNGEON *Side Trek Design Competition, as well as "Masque of Dreams" in #142. Currently he's being wire-tapped by the NSA, who are keen to learn his secret.*

Stefan Happ always wondered if he'd ever help write a story about drug dealers. He didn't think it would be anything like this.

Ashavan Doyon is a 7th-level secretary at a liberal arts college in New England. He lives in Massachusetts with his husband and their two pugs.


Mt.Zogon
YOU MAY HAVE DEFEATED ME IN THIS DIMENSION! BUT THE UNIVERSE IS MULTI-DIMENSIONAL AND INFINITELY VARIABLE!
IN COUNTLESS ALTERNATE DIMENSIONS, I AM THE VICTOR AND YOU ARE THE LOSER! HA! WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT?
WELL, IN ONE PARTICULAR DIMENSION, I CUT OFF YOUR HEAD AND IMPALE IT ON A STICK!
PFF. YOU HAVE NO CONCEPT OF--
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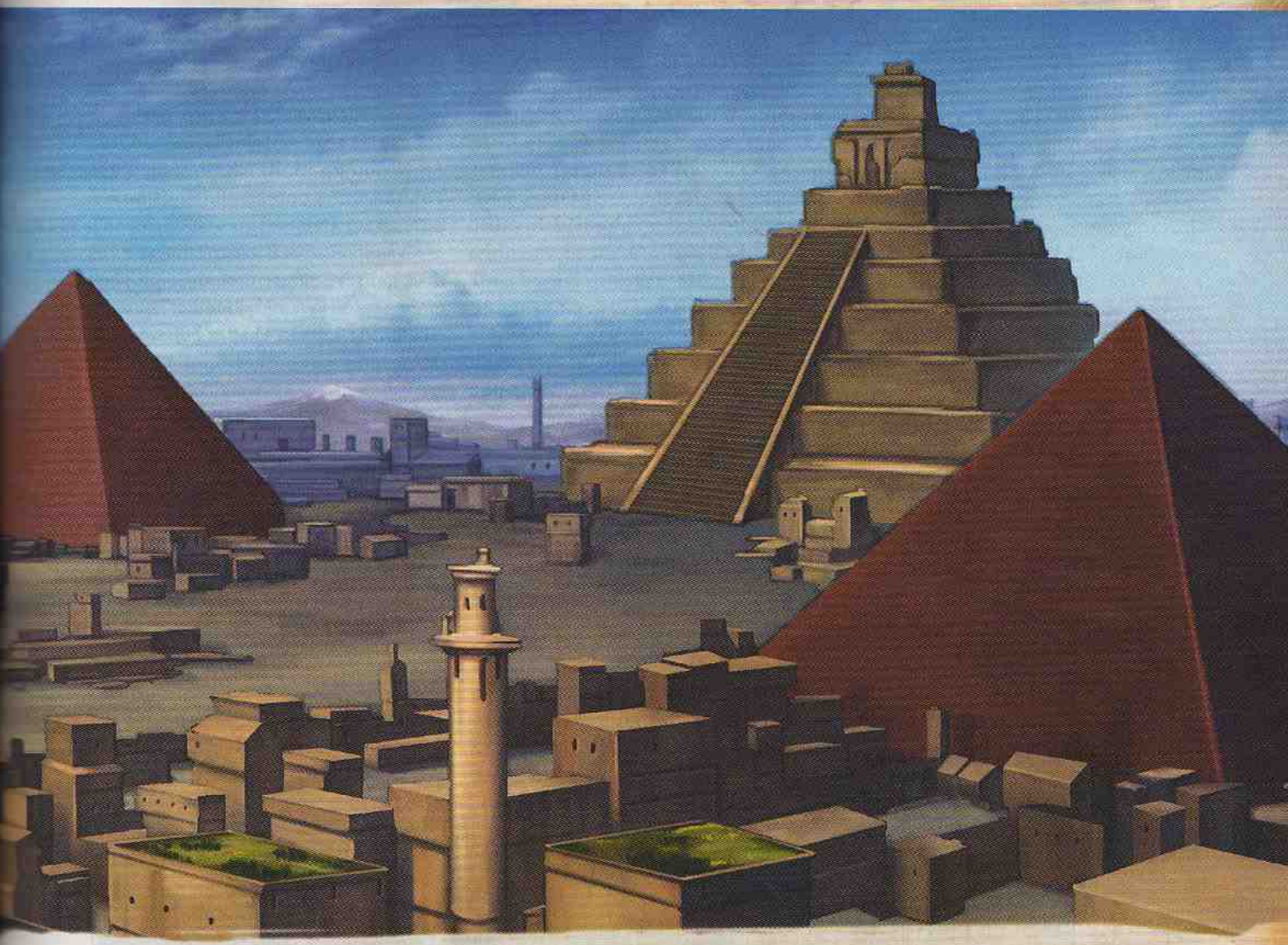
EXAG | City of Clay

BY STEPHEN S. GREER , B. MATTHEW CONKLIN III, TOM GANZ, STEFAN HAPP, AND ASHAVAN DOYON
BY UDON
BY ROBERT LAZZARETTI



The Flanaess has been home to a variety of civilizations and races over the ages, with the Flan being among the earliest of the humans to settle on the subcontinent. But, even they may not have been the first. Occasionally, a site is found which was a ruin when the Flan first walked the land. In the fog-shrouded Mounds of Dawn exists one such site, a city built of baked and hardened clay. Who knows what secrets out of the dim past are held beneath its dusty streets, right under the noses of the Flan who live there today?

–Erik Mona

"The Mystery of Exag"

Standing atop a low plateau where the Mounds of Dawn meet the slopes of the Yatil Mountains, Exag, the City of Clay, has intrigued scholars and archaeologists for generations. High walls of hardened red clay, invulnerable to weapons, time, and the elements, surround the city, as strong today as the day they were made. Pyramids, conical towers, and soaring spires of red clay bricks fill a city large enough to hold several thousand people, yet today only a relative few rustic Flan tribesmen inhabit Exag.

CITY FEATURES

The remote city of Exag was originally built by a mysterious extraplanar knowledge-seeking race known to historical scholars as the "Crafters" (see History of Exag). The city rests on a large plateau, surrounded by an even larger valley. A series of streams in the valley run from a small lake in the hills about 4 miles east of the city itself. An ancient aqueduct of supernaturally hard, seamless red clay runs from this lake to the city. The aqueduct still functions, sending a

steady stream of fresh water into the city. Local bandits and monsters avoid both the aqueduct and the city, for they fear the city's strange power with primal superstition.

The Crafters constructed the walls, the aqueduct, and three pyramids, and these seamless red clay buildings have escaped the ravages of time for centuries. Their servants crafted the remaining buildings of reddish clay bricks, but these structures have gradually degraded. The timeless clay of the walls, pyramids, and aqueduct radiates overpowering transmutation magic and has 2,700 hp, Hardness 24, and a Break DC of 95.

A narrow, unpaved cart path winds north to Exag from Perrenland, arriving at the city's gate, located in the southeast quarter of the unusual walls. Perrenland's embassy compound (area **11**) is located 150 yards south of the town gate. The cart path wraps around the city walls and continues north, skirting the Yatils and eventually arriving in the lands of the Wolf Nomads. Another cart track heads east from Exag to the shores of Lake Quag, where several small fishing villages eke out a dangerous and meager living. The villagers here, normal humans, dwarves, and halflings, have escaped the Crafter cult mentality that dominates Exag.

Exag's walls appear carved out of the earth itself. A 25-foot-wide opening in the wall serves as Exag's only gate. The ancient gate hinges remain mounted in the walls, but the wooden gates disappeared long ago. No one guards the gate, though locals frequently mill about the plaza beyond. Exag is rarely attacked, as the denizens of the Mounds of Dawn find little of value in Exag.

Exag could easily accommodate a population of ten thousand, but many of the buildings in the town sit empty with brick debris and vermin scattered inside and out. In most of the intact buildings, the populace only inhabits the lowest floor; years of erosion and wear have made the upper floors unstable. Cracked reddish rock flagstones pave the streets of the entire city (except area 7).

Exag (Large City): Non-standard; AL N; 500 gp limit; Assets 20,000 gp; Population 4,000; Isolated (human 99%, other 1%).

Authority Figures: **Banafar Thragyeb**, LE male human Crafter cult cleric 11 (prophet of the Central Pyramid), **"Mother" Innaria**, NG female human Crafter cult adept 8 (Mother of Life). These two prophets are influential, but many family groups and neighborhood clans follow their individual adepts or chieftains.

Important Characters: **Ahmed Hissar Hassan**, CG male human fighter 7 (innkeeper, general store owner), **Abby Starbottom**, LG female gnome expert 4/illusionist 3 (merchant, organizes quarterly supply trains to Exag), **Arghakot Annapuma**, NE male yakfolk sorcerer 5 (slave procurer, body melded to a local fortune teller named Pan'phar Thrissek), **Bertram Hugelrote** CE male human aristocrat 4/fighter 5 (semi-exiled Perrenland "ambassador" to

Exag), **Bantar Zherall**, NG male human expert 10/rogue 5 (archaeologist), **Khan Shen'zen Ammarat**, LN male human monk 4 (pilgrim leader).

History of Exag

The exact date of the construction of Exag is unknown, but when the Flan tribes stumbled upon the city, it had already stood empty for at least twelve millennia. Little is known about the Crafters who constructed it, but most believe it to have served them as an outpost on Oerth. To protect their servants within the city from the dangerous wilderness outside, the Crafters created the supernaturally strong walls of red clay around the city. Their servants built a city of red clay brick inside the walls, around their fabulous pyramids. Despite the superb workmanship, their construction lacked the timeless magic of the Crafters. Where the Crafters came from, why they built the city, and why they left are all questions that remain unanswered to this day, although they are the topic of heated scholarly debate in some circles.

About 2,600 years ago, the Flan people spread across the Eastern Oerik continent. Primitive hunter-gatherers, the nomadic Flan tribes wandered the lands, battling for survival against the multitude of dangerous races and creatures that claimed the wild forests and mountains as their own. At that time, a Flan tribe ruled by a powerful and charismatic warlord named Exag faced certain annihilation by a vast horde of lizardfolk. Pursued for days through the Mounds of Dawn, the exhausted, battle-worn tribe discovered the abandoned city. Uninhabited and devoid of most animal life, the city gave the courageous Flan warriors a place to make a last stand. When the lizardfolk poured into the city, the Flan stood ready. They fought from rooftops, walls, and the steps of the central pyramid, while inside the ancient structures their women and children desperately sought refuge from the onslaught. While the savage fighting raged around her, Prizin'ha, a Flan grandmother, climbed the staircase to the top of the central pyramid. Clutching her grandchildren, she fled into the darkness within the chamber at its peak.

Prizin'ha emerged from the stairs a few minutes later, carrying several clay disks with strange symbols on them, remnants of the Crafters' lost library. She stepped over to a basin built into the top of the pyramid and dropped one of the disks into it, she then cut her own throat and collapsed. A deep rumble in the ground shook the city as the central pyramid began to vibrate with magical energy. Hundreds of Flan and lizardfolk gazed towards the massive structure as dozens of earth elementals marched out of the central pyramid to lay waste to the lizardfolk warriors. Only a few remnants of their army escaped the city walls.

After it was all over and the lizardfolk were destroyed, the Flan survivors gathered around the rapidly cooling body of their new martyr. Exag, their warlord, gathered the body of the aged woman in his arms and declared her the first "Mother of Life." He decreed that the city was built by the gods to protect the Flan from their enemies, and that his tribe would live here forever. Unfortunately, the citizens grew a little too dependant on the safety of the city walls. Within a few generations, terrifying stories of the outside world became commonplace, and the city's new leaders used this fear to maintain control over the lives of the citizens. Soon afterward, the remaining residents of the newly named city of Exag founded a cult. They worshipped the Crafters as god-like beings, but seldom (if ever) left the confines of the city walls.

When the first Baklunish settlers came to Exag 1,600 years later, they found little of value in the city or its surroundings. The Baklunish settlers soon moved on, writing the first "modern" historical accounts of the City of Clay. During this time the first major exodus of Exag natives occurred. Contact with the Baklunish settlers had convinced many locals that perhaps the world

Ahmed Hissar Hassan

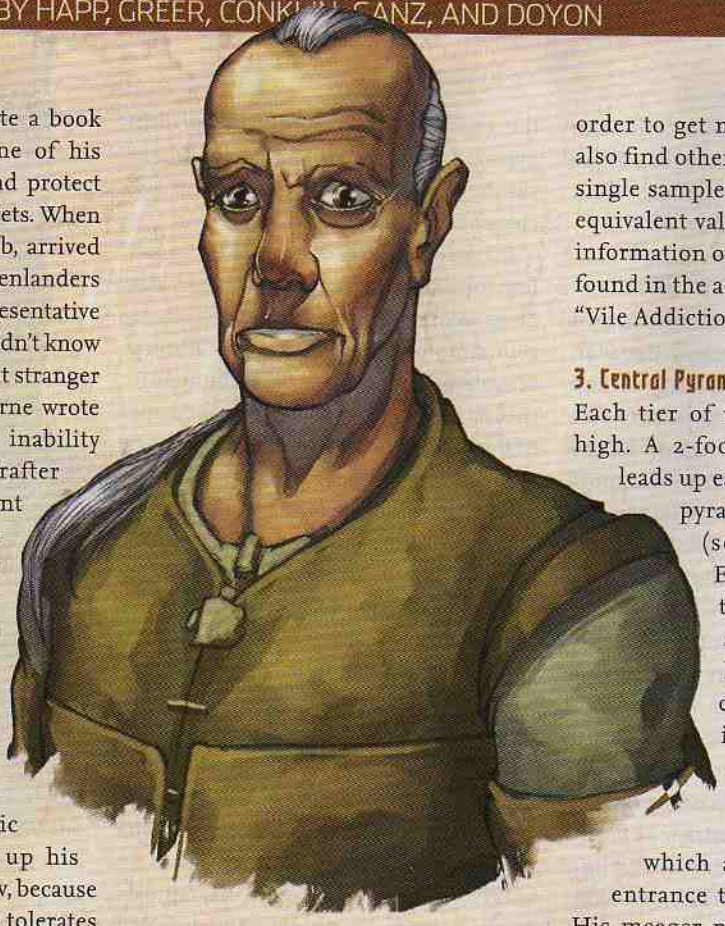
was not as horrible as their prophets claimed. Fearful of losing control, the city government clamped down on the remaining Flan, punishing anyone who tried to leave and reinforcing the ancient superstitions. Since Perrenland began to congeal about 300 years ago, trade and contact with the outside world has slowly increased once again. A steady trickle of natives flees the city each year, leaving behind a people ever stranger and more desperate.

Exag natives tolerate other humans, though hunger and instability often lead them to attack weaker visitors for their food and belongings. The vast majority of Exag's people consider the Crafter-built buildings holy ground and tolerate no tampering, construction, probing, or even close inspection of these structures by outsiders.

A few years ago, a scholar from Perrenland named Bearne managed to trick Banafar Thragyeb (see Personalities of Exag) into allowing him access to the central pyramid. Betraying Banafar, Bearne fled back to Schwartzenbruin to

present his findings and write a book about Exag. Banafar sent one of his sons to try to stop Bearne and protect the sanctity of the Crafter secrets. When Banafar's son, Yorsel Thragyeb, arrived in Schwartzenbruin, the Perrenlanders hailed him as the official representative of Exag, mainly because they didn't know what else to call him. The silent stranger from Exag puzzled them. Bearne wrote his book on Exag, but his inability to produce any of the Crafter disks and Yorsel's subsequent denouncement of Bearne as a charlatan and swindler discredited his findings.

The Court of the Voorman soon tired of the crude "ambassador" from Exag, and Yorsel left. He did not return to Exag, and his location today remains unknown. Bearne slipped into academic obscurity and soon packed up his home and fled in disgrace. Now, because of Bearne's treachery, Banafar tolerates few strangers and zealously defends the Crafter structures. However, the stranglehold the Crafter cult mentality has on most of Exag's citizens continues to dissolve as more citizens realize that the world holds more potential than a life of self-inflicted imprisonment in Exag. While alcohol and herbal concoctions have always given Exag's people a way to escape for a while, a new, more insidious threat has emerged from the shadows of the nearby Yatil Mountains.



BanafarThragyeb

KEYED LOCATIONS

Almost exclusively human, the locals are organized in family clan groups clustered in adjacent buildings. There is little open conflict inside the town, as the locals spend most of their days growing vegetables, mushrooms, and other small crops. They also hunt rats and pigeons for food. Most are poor and desperate, and will not hesitate to band together to beat and rob any foreigner that shows signs of weakness.

1. Front Gate

Past the gate, the ground changes from the hard-packed dirt of the cart path to cracked flagstones of reddish, freckled stone.

2. Flagstone Plaza

This plaza stands empty except when foreign traders come to Exag. At the far end of the plaza, a tall ziggurat towers over the city. The tops of two smaller pyramids can be seen to the east and west. Citizens congregate in this square throughout the day and eye visitors suspiciously as they enter, hiding in alleys and peering through windows. Would-be guides in the plaza, looking to earn extra food, quickly approach any foreigners who look lost.

In addition to guides, drug dealers also wait for an opportune time to approach. The citizens of Exag have used various medicinal herbs over the years to heal wounds and induce mild euphoria. Recently a new drug named Green Welcome has arrived in Exag, a drug that rapidly hooks its users into a cycle of addiction. Now, in order to get more, local addicts must also find others to hook on the drug. A single sample sells for 20–50 gp or an equivalent value in trade goods. More information on Green Welcome can be found in the accompanying adventure, "Vile Addiction."

3. Central Pyramid and the Prophet's Home

Each tier of this ziggurat is 25 feet high. A 2-foot-wide steep staircase leads up each step to the top of the pyramid. Banafar Thragyeb (see "Personalities of Exag") is the master of the cult of the Crafters and the undisputed leader of Exag. A disheveled and mentally ill cleric, Thragyeb lives in the 15-foot-by-15-foot chamber on the top tier of the pyramid, which also contains the only entrance to the chambers below. His meager possessions lie piled in a corner of the room, and a crude rug covers the opening to the narrow winding staircase that leads to the mysteries within the ziggurat.

Banafar speaks Common, but he does not speak to foreigners willingly. After Bearne duped him, his chief goal became preventing further intrusions into the pyramids by those seeking to unlock the secrets of the Crafters.

The pyramid contains the temples, living quarters, libraries, and recreational areas used by the Crafters millennia ago. It connects via an underground passage to the other two pyramids. Dangerous traps and even deadlier red clay golems, earth elementals, and magical creatures guard the ziggurat interior, all infused with Crafter magic that grants them fast healing 10.

To help enforce the sanctity of the pyramids, Thragyeb can call upon several hundred locals who live nearby, forming them into mobs to pursue and kill any intruders. The Crafters hid the secret of their construction methods deep inside the pyramid, guarded by many dangerous traps. The secret is

said to be a long-forgotten magical ritual or powerful spell that binds and shapes earth.

If a foreign military force or any large organized force of combatants attacks the city, Mother Innaria (see area **13**) leaves her home and comes to this location, ready to sacrifice herself for the good of her people using the "Mother of Life" ritual. At the very top of the pyramid is a small receptacle that radiates strong conjuration magic. Anyone who can cast divine spells can activate the power of this item by dropping a Crafter-constructed disk into the bowl and then anointing it with the blood of a humanoid with an Intelligence of at least 3. The sacrifice must die within 1 minute of the blood being spilled and must be a willing participant. Once a creature has been sacrificed in this manner, its soul is beyond the reach of any mortal magic, even *miracle*, *wish*, and *true resurrection*. A DC 50 Use Magic Device check can activate the ritual without the clay disk or the sacrifice. Once activated, the pyramid calls forth 4d4 elder earth elementals (*Monster Manual* 97) who also have fast healing 10. While any humanoid can begin the ritual, the same creature must be able to give instructions to the earth elementals (in any language) while it is dying, so the Crafter cult adepts either sacrifice themselves or a trained volunteer to ensure success. These earth elementals, constructed of the same reddish clay as the pyramids and walls of the city, scour the entire city, following the last commands of the dying sacrifice for 1 hour. They do not venture outside the city. This power of the pyramid can be activated once per day, but has not been used in centuries. Banafar has been teaching a local adept this ritual, so that he can take over after Banafar's death. The use of this bowl and ritual is deeply ingrained in local folklore, and PCs who spend time in Exag, use divination magic, or watch the local festivals may well determine the nature of this ritual.

4. Western Pyramid

This 70-foot-tall pyramid has no apparent entrance. The seamless clay construction makes climbing it extremely difficult (DC 30).

The entrance, located in the southwest corner, can be detected with *true seeing* or a DC 30 Search check. Pushing a small stone lever causes the 10-foot-by-5-foot stone slab to slide inward amid loud grinding noises sure to attract attention from the locals, who attack en masse as soon as they realize what has happened. The PCs might escape the wrath of the locals by entering the guardian chamber of the pyramid and activating the lever inside that room to close the slab behind them. This carries its own risk, however, as several clay golems guard the entry chamber. Treat these golems as normal clay golems with fast healing 10. This pyramid contains the Crafters' traveling gate, located in the central chamber of the pyramid. Two immortal celestial battletitans (*Monster Manual III* 38) guard the extraplanar gate at all times.

5. Eastern Pyramid

While physically similar to the other pyramid at area 4, this pyramid's entrance is cunningly hidden at its pointed top. A *true seeing* or DC 30 Search check reveals the stone lever that slides a small stone slab inside the pyramid. Once inside, a 2-foot-wide tunnel leads downward into the pyramid for 75 feet before emerging into a beautifully crafted room with marble fresco walls. A DC 15 Knowledge (the planes) check reveals that hundreds of cosmologies are depicted on the murals, with the cosmology of the campaign being only one. The floor, constructed of the same marble chip fresco, depicts the Flanaess. Wispy shadow images flickering over the image seem to show "real-time" weather patterns. Recognizing the images as weather requires a DC 15 Knowledge (nature) check. DC 20 Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (history) checks reveal that the fresco map of the Flanaess depicts the geographical features of this portion of the continent as it appeared thousands of years ago, with the devastation brought by the Rain of Colorless Fire noticeably absent.

A *wail of the banshee* trap (*Dungeon Master's Guide* page 74) protects this room if anything tries to harm its designs.

6. Hassan's Guesthouse

See Chapter One of "Vile Addiction" for more information on Ahmed Hissar Hassan and his guesthouse.

7. Aqueduct Pool and City Park

This area contains many small gardens, stunted fruit trees, and patches of cultivated ground dominated by a central pool of water fed by the smooth red clay aqueduct. Women and children work in the small fields, using crude hand tools to till and weed, while others carry buckets of water from the pool to the fields and vegetable patches. The cracked flagstones were not used to pave the ground here, and this is the only place the locals grow food aside from small home gardens, as they will not pull up any of the "sacred" flagstones. The water in the pool is fresh, clear, and clean. The pool is made of smooth Crafter clay and is 50 feet long, 20 feet wide, and 10 feet deep. The locals do not mind foreigners taking water from the pool, as long as they leave the construction alone.

8. Aqueduct

The aqueduct rises gradually to a lake 4 miles away. It stands 50 feet high, with buttresses every 150 feet to support the 15-foot-wide trough at the top. Water flowing from the hills to the city is always pure, as the aqueduct provides a permanent *purify food and drink* effect on all water it carries. In addition, tiny gates to the Elemental Plane of Water built into the aqueduct every few hundred yards ensure that the aqueduct always provides plenty of water for the people. Examination of the aqueduct's natural source of water in the hills above the town reveals that the aqueduct delivers more water than its natural source would seem to indicate was possible. The gates may be located using standard magical divination methods, but cannot be accessed or damaged without defeating

Adventures in Exag

Besides the upcoming *Seeds of Sehan* campaign arc, the adventure possibilities in Exag may include:

- Bringing the renegade ambassador of Perrenlandto justice.
- Working with Bantar Zherall on the covert excavation of Crafter secrets. He might hire the PCs to guard him and his archeologists while they search the pyramids for the secrets of the Crafters.
- Guarding Abby Starbottom's merchant caravans against attack while en route to or from Exag.
- Using Exag as a base of operations for exploring of the Yatil Mountains and Mounds of Dawn.
- Tracking down Ahmed Hassan on behalf of his former employer, who wants his head on a platter.
- Guarding a know-it-all scholar who has come to Exag to observe the locals' rituals and festivals.

the hardness and hit points of the aqueduct itself.

9. Ruined Temple

This temple lies in ruins and appears no more unusual than any of the other ruined buildings scattered about the city. While most of the brick buildings in town have erosion and other damage, some, including this building, have actually collapsed or been destroyed over the centuries.

Once a huge temple complex, this structure's collapsed ruins contain many secret rooms, boltholes, and hidden dangers. The Crafters' mortal servants built the temple as a place to worship their own gods. The locals hunt the periphery of the temple ruins for rats and wild dogs, but hesitate to explore its interior. Bantar Zherall (see Personalities of Exag) made note of this fact and moved his covert archeology team inside the ruin, where they maintain a protocol of absolute stealth. Slow, careful digging over the last few months has led them to a tunnel 25 feet below the complex. They hope to stumble upon a passage beneath the city that leads them to one of the pyramids. Skilled rogues, the archaeological team moves about at night, climbing the city wall to the east to travel to a base camp in the hills 5 miles away where they have buried a cache of supplies and food.

10. City Walls

The seamless 30-foot-high red clay walls of Exag have no battlements and appear flimsy, as they are only 3 feet thick. Although they are impossible to climb without a rope or magic, someone might be able to enter the city unnoticed using a grappling hook, as the walls are unguarded.

Characters with stonecunning or Knowledge (architecture and engineering) who examine the walls can determine that they are supernaturally strong.

11. Perrenland Embassy

The locals do not tolerate a large-scale foreign military presence, but Perrenland considers Exag a strategic location in the Mounds of Dawn and Yatil Mountains region. They believe that Exag needs to be closely monitored, lest some outside influence transform its residents into a threat. Voorman Perren established the first embassy of Perrenland in Exag in 430 CY and has maintained it ever since. When Iggwilv ruled Perrenland from 481–491 CY, the embassy became a refuge for Perrenland's nobility, who sought to escape her ironhanded rule. Many of the improvements and defenses present today were constructed during those dark times.

Bertram Hugelrote, oldest son of the Hugelrote clan and the black sheep of the family, runs the embassy. Bertram's father, Voorman Hugelrote, forced him into this position to learn humility and finally do something of value for Perrenland. A whoring, carousing boor, Bertram has brought nothing but discredit to his family. Unfortunately, Bertram found a hotbed of fellowship at the Perrenland embassy in Exag, an assignment given only to outcasts and troublemakers with nowhere else to go.

The embassy itself is a three-story fortified building standing in the open. Roof panels lift up to reveal ballistae, and arrow slits help keep attackers away from the walls. The entrance to the embassy is on the second floor, reachable by a wooden ramp that can be easily burned during a siege. The embassy building features a hall, an armory, a kennel, a small temple to Fharlanghn, a tiny jail, quarters for its personnel, and an opulent ambassador's office.

The embassy is home to the ambassador himself and his staff, a small contingent of guards and their lieutenant (human fighter 7), and a few hunting dogs. In addition, two gargoyles serve as permanent building guards. They usually cling motionless to the walls or roof, watching over the entrances or windows. On rare occasions, one of the gargoyles flies into town to hunt a single victim. If the embassy guards are away on raids, the gargoyles stalk the staff left behind for sport, never assaulting them, but terrifying them in ways amusing only to gargoyles.

12. The Mystic Eye

This small, single-story abode has a sign hanging above its entrance labeled "The Mystic Eye" in Common. See "Vile Addiction" for more information on Pan'phar Thrissek and his store.

13. The Home of "Mother" Innaria

"Mother" Innaria (NG human female Crafter Cult adept 8) currently holds the honorary title of "Mother of Life," first bestowed upon a widow by Exag during the aftermath of the battle with the lizardfolk 2,600 years ago. She lives in a tall spire of red clay bricks. The tower's upper levels are not safe to walk on, although Innaria maintains a rope ladder that allows her to climb to the top of her tower nonetheless. A dozen loyal young toughs (warriors 2–3) surround and protect her at all times. Reptile skins adorn the outside of her home, most of them quite old and brittle, attached to the walls with foul-smelling animal glue. Innaria

spends most of her time ministering to the locals and casting minor cure spells, always ready to quickly move to the central pyramid to do her oath-sworn duty to summon the elementals with her life-blood. Foreigners who seek to make contact with her must overcome her bodyguards' initial unfriendly attitude. Innaria herself is quite reasonable and well-spoken. She asks that visitors respect Exag's customs. Her initial attitude towards most strangers is friendly. She willingly shares most of the Crafter legends with PCs who make and maintain friendly contact with her, albeit always warning them to keep their distance from the pyramids and not tamper with Crafter constructions.

Personalities of Exag

Bertram Hugelrote: CE human male aristocrat 4/fighter 5, Exag's ambassador from Perrenland. This decadent, middle-aged man dresses in fineries, constantly keeping a perfumed handkerchief to his nose when moving about the city. He has finely coifed blond hair and a medium build. He secretly leads the embassy guards on bandit raids in the surrounding area, wearing masks and taking care not to get tracked back to the embassy.

Banafar Thragyeb: LE male human cleric 11 (Crafter Cult). This elderly man pulls his little remaining grayish hair back in a long ponytail. Dirty and disheveled, his motivations are detailed in area **3**.

"Mother" Innaria: NG human female Crafter Cult adept 8, see area **13**. An elderly woman with long white hair tied in a bun, Innaria wears hand-dyed rough wool shifts with a fine fox pelt cloak in the winter, one of the few luxuries she allows herself.

Ahmed Hissar Hassan: CG male human fighter 7, innkeeper, and general store owner. A middle-aged Baklunish man with a long beard and laugh lines around his eyes, he wears a simple tunic and stained leather apron, and appears in fine physical condition.

Bantar Zherall: LN male human expert 5/rogue 4. An archaeologist and treasure hunter from the City of Greyhawk, Bantar took a substantial commission to learn as much about the Crafters as possible. He wears dark clothing and avoids contact with almost everyone. His four associates (human expert 2/rogue 2/ranger 1) are all expert treasure hunters and members of the Greyhawk Thieves' Guild. They are well-equipped, crafty, and hide traces of their work very well.

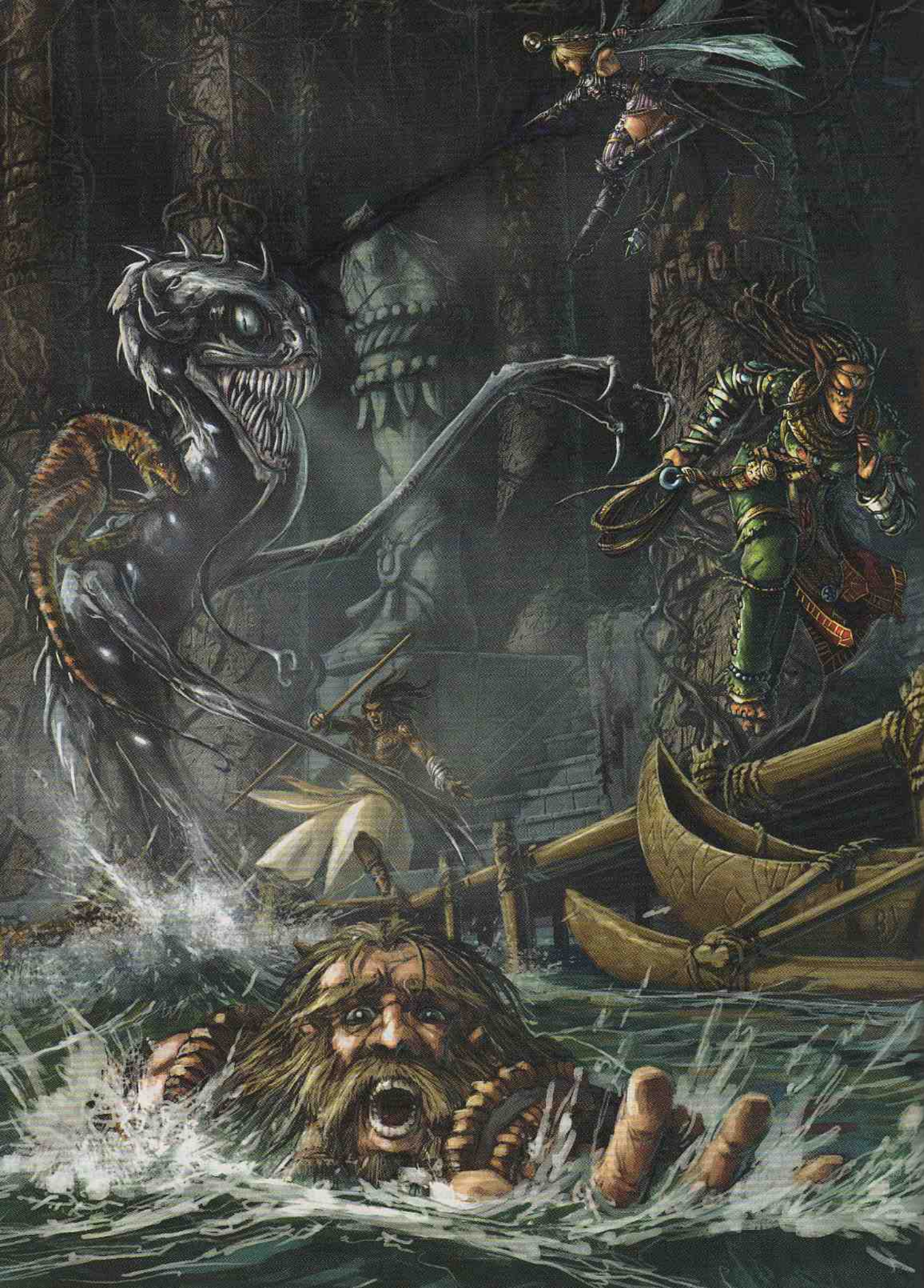
Pan'phar Thrissek (aka Arghakot Annapuma): NE Medium body-melded human expert 4 (yak folk sorcerer 5, *Monster Manual II* 201). A short and skinny middle-aged man, Pan'phar is always gesturing with a rat-skull-tipped cane. He has a tattoo of an eye in the center of his forehead, a small moustache, and a pointed beard.

Abby Starbottom

Abby Starbottom: LG female gnome expert 4/illusionist 4. A benevolent trader and toymaker, Abby is the only outsider trusted by the locals. She brings them supplies and dried fruit, which the locals desperately need to stave off scurvy and other diseases. Abby tries to come in the weeks before each festival, except mid-winter's Needfest, traveling north from Perrenland with several dozen wagons and volunteer gnome guards, who see their work as mostly charity, since they rarely turn a profit. Abby's altruism comes from her time as an apprentice merchant. At the time, her master organized a merchant caravan to Exag, hoping to find a new market. Exag's desperate conditions made a deep impression on the compassionate young gnome, and she made it her personal goal to do whatever she can to improve the lot of Exag's people, especially the children.

Abby finances her regular trade missions by running a respected toy making business in Krestible and Schwartzenbruin, where her clan is famous for its craftsmen. She is very respectful of the Crafter cult members. Innaria and Hassan are close friends of hers, but Banafar distrusts her motives.

Khan Shen'zen Ammarat: LN male human monk 4, pilgrim leader. Khan and his pilgrims have traveled from Eru-Tovar (Wolf Nomads) to seek the fabled pass to Shambhala-Na and the 999 steps to enlightenment. The pilgrims plan to spend several years at a pagoda rumored to hold vast knowledge there, researching and meditating at the top of the world. At first unsuccessful in finding the pass, with the help of Pan'phar they have found a possible route. Khan speaks enthusiastically about the skills of Pan'phar Thrissek, with whom he often walks and converses. More information on Shambhala-Na and Pan'phar is available in "Dread Pagoda of the Inscrutable Ones," part three of the Seeds of Sehan adventure arc.



Savage Tide

City of Broken Idols

Atop the crown of the Isle of Dread, a hateful monster broods. Spawned by the Prince of Demons, the architect of the *shadow pearls* dwells deep under the ruins of ancient Thanaclan. As long as this vile monster lives, the threat of the savage tide remains, looming dark on the horizon.

"City of Broken Idols" is the seventh chapter of the Savage Tide Adventure Path, a complete campaign consisting of 12 adventures appearing in DUNGEON magazine. For additional aid in running this campaign, check out DRAGON magazine's monthly "Savage Tidings" articles, a series that helps players and DMs prepare for and expand upon the campaign. Issue #354 of DRAGON magazine features the totemic demonslayer, a new prestige class that focuses on fighting and defeating demons, be they at the heart of the Isle of Dread or encountered in the depths of the Abyss itself.

The PCs should be 13th level when they begin "City of Broken Idols." They should gain enough experience to advance to 14th level halfway through the adventure, and 15th by the end.

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ADVENTURE PATH | HIGH LEVEL (13TH–20TH) | WILDERNESS AND DUNGEON CRAWL

Adventure Background

Olman myth tells of a terrible earthquake, of a time when the Fangs of Zotzilaha opened and lit the skies on fire. A time when the gods' wrath cast down their ancestors from the lofty peaks. After that fateful day, the Olman Empire was no more. All that remained were ruins of a once-great city and a scattering of tribes destined to endure disease, famine, and monstrous predators. The Olman people proudly point to the fact that they have survived, despite the trials their gods have placed before them. Their ancestors must have angered them greatly indeed, and as a result, the Olmans of the Seven Villages regard the ancient ruins, particularly the central plateau of the isle, as taboo. It is unwise to tread upon ground cursed by the gods.

The truth of what brought down the ancient Olman Empire is much different. In the weeks before the fall, their civilization was at the height of its glory. Its people had settled a wild frontier, survived a terrible war against the aboleths of the alien city of Golismorga, and constructed an incredible city atop the central plateau. This was Thanaclan, the "Land of the Pearl." Yet after the aboleth war, the people of Thanaclan grew complacent, even decadent. When a new threat arose from the flooded tunnels below their isle, they were ill prepared to defend themselves.

As the Olmans finished construction of a Great Temple to honor their gods, the koprus of the island's depths took action. Their prayers to the Prince of Demons were answered with a vile plot. For four decades, the koprus toiled in their subteranean lairs, cultivating and nurturing the largest black pearl the world had ever seen. Birthed from a fiendish giant oyster and poisoned with malign magic and liquid madness harvested from the ruined aboleth city, the koprus placed this first *shadow pearl* where the Olmans of Thanaclan would find it.

Before long, the irresistible beauty of the *shadow pearl* was ensconced within the Great Temple, and its fell influence began to surface. The religious leaders of Thanaclan grew wrathful and cruel, and powerful storms began to lash the island. At the height of a great typhoon, one of Thanaclan's leaders woke from his fugue and realized what evil had come to Thanaclan. He came to the chamber of the Great One, where the *shadow pearl* was kept on display, and smashed it to fragments to break its curse forever. Yet this act only sealed the empire's doom. As the pearl cracked, it unleashed the first and greatest savage tide. Not only did the tide transform many of Thanaclan's citizens, it also tore holes in reality between the isle and the Abyss. Legions of fiendish dinosaurs, demons, and worse assaulted the empire. The land itself rebelled. Earthquakes shook the isle, volcanoes exploded, and under the streets of Thanaclan burst massive geysers that brought scalding death. Many perished in that first night, and in a matter of months the Kingdom of Thanaclan had all but vanished from the world, replaced by a prehistoric land destined to become the Isle of Dread.

For the next thousand years, the koprus were content with their conquest, yet a few years ago their demonic patron came to their leaders in a vision. He required more *shadow pearls* for an even greater cause, and the koprus would need to craft dozens, if not hundreds, to realize it. Demogorgon went so far as to send an aspect of his blasphemous visage, a monster crafted partially in the kopru image yet mostly in his own, to become their leader. Khala the Two-Headed has dwelt at the heart of the Great Temple of Thanaclan for years now. The creation of a *shadow pearl* begins with his vile touch, after which it is sent below to Golismorga to absorb the madness of the Elder Evils before finally being delivered to the pirates of the Crimson Fleet for distribution throughout the world.

Adventure Synopsis

To stop the production of *shadow pearls*, the PCs travel to the Isle of Dread's central plateau and face the powerful creatures that inhabit it, including a host of demons in the service of Demogorgon. During their exploration, they meet the brave followers of a missing missionary named Noltus Innersol. Unknown to these followers, Noltus has been killed and replaced by a shapechanging maurezhi demon who soon springs a deadly ambush on the PCs .

On the shores of the central lake of the plateau, the PCs explore an abandoned village, whose population has been exterminated to supply human sacrifices to Khala's ever-increasing hunger. From the ruins of this village and the mourning couatls that now dwell there, the PCs learn what they need to know about Khala. From there, they invade the main base of the cult of Demogorgon on the Isle of Dread and defeat Khala the Two-Headed, an aspect of the Prince of Demons himself.

Adventure Hooks

If you're running "City of Broken Idols" as a stand-alone adventure or as part of your own campaign, you might need another introduction aside from the one presented in Part One. One classic method is to have the PCs discover an ancient treasure map that points to the Great Temple of Thanaclan and promises a a black pearl the size of a man's head. The PCs could be hired to secure this treasure by a collector on the mainland before a second group hired by a rival collector gets there first.

Alternately, the PCs could be hired by the church of Pelor to track down a missing missionary. Noltus Innersol was sent to the Isle of Dread months ago, yet no word has been heard from him. The church asks the PCs to start their search at Farshore, where they can meet with Jakara and gain Noltus' letter as detailed below.

PART ONE: THE MISSING MISSIONARY

Early in "The Lightless Depths," the PCs likely rescued two prisoners from the troglodyte lepers of Laogroat. One of these remained with them, a troglodyte guide named Irgzid. The other was a diseased and feebleminded Olman named Jakara. Upon his rescue, he thanked the PCs but informed them he had to leave them to continue on to Farshore at the bidding of a man named Noltus Innersol. Before he left, he invited the PCs to seek him out in Farshore once their business below had been concluded. If the PCs failed to rescue

Jakara, you'll need to modify the following text by having the man who delivers Noltus's letter to Vesserin be a different acolyte of the missing missionary.

When the PCs return to Farshore, they're greeted by Lavinia Vanderboren. Eager to hear tales of their adventures below the Isle of Dread, she tells them that there's been a new development as well. The man they rescued from Laogroat brought with him a message from Noltus Innersol, a missionary who visited Farshore several months before Lavinia and the PCs arrived and who's been missing ever since he left to bring the word of Pelor to the secluded tribes dwelling deep in the isle's interior. Jakara, the Olman they rescued, waits to speak to them at the Farshore Chapel. The PCs find him still recovering from his ordeals, seated in a large chair and clutching an ivory scrolltube in his hands. If none of the PCs speak Olman, they may need a translator, for Jakara knows only a few words of Common.

"Ah, my saviors! Thank you again for delivering me from that cursed cavern. As I promised you then, I have a tale to tell you. I have spoken with your resident priest here, and with your lovely patron as well, and they have highly recommended you for the task my master has set me upon.

"My name is Jakara. I am of the Tiger Clan, yet my people are not those of the Seven Villages. My tribe dwelt in a narrow valley in the mountains west of the central plateau—at least, until recently. We have long known that there was a darkness atop that taboo place, that our ancestors once dwelt there, and that they angered the gods and made this place what it is today. We do not go there. It is not safe. And for some time, what dwelt there remained there as well.

"Yet of late, things have changed. The demons who dwell in the City of Broken Idols have turned their attentions outward, and earlier this year, my tribe was slaughtered by men wearing the skins of demon tigers. I alone survived, and long were the nights I contemplated a suicide trek to the taboo heights to avenge my kin. Yet before I fell to such a lure, I met a man from your world. This was Noltus Innersol.

"He had already gathered a flock from the island's other tribes. Lizardfolk and phanaton and Olman alike followed him, and his words were captivating. I found much wisdom in his words, for he too had long fought against the demon host. He seemed particularly taken with my totems, and my focus in opposing the demons. For a time, I traveled with him, and helped him to gather more followers. Noltus had learned of the lost village of Mantru, and his goal was to travel there, atop the central plateau, and rescue the villagers from whatever peril kept them isolated from their kin.

"Yet he was also taken with my skills. He decided he would lead his followers to bring the word of his god to the heights, yet asked me to carry a message to your tribe of Farshore. He also asked me to spread the lore of totems to the people of the Seven Villages—it has been the wisdom of my tribe to keep such knowledge to ourselves, but I see now that it can serve no purpose if I am the last.

"Before I made it to Farshore, alas, my trail was discovered by the skin-wearing fiends. I hid Noltus's message in the stump of a tree and turned to face my tormentors, but they proved too much even for me. I defeated them, but not before they stole my mind. It was not long until the troglodytes captured me, and thus my state when you discovered me wretched in their cage. After you freed me, I returned to the site of my failure to find Noltus's message safe. I have brought it here, and your priest and patron have read its contents. They wish you to read as well."

At this point, Jakara hands them the scroll tube. Crafted of ivory and inlaid with gold depicting holy symbols of Pelor, the tube is worth 200 gp. The letter within is far more valuable—its contents appear as a handout on the next page.

If the PCs ask for more information about Noltus, both Vesserin and Jakara can tell them he is a Pelorian cleric from Sasserine. Charged by Kera Gosalar of that city's temple of Pelor to bring the word of the Sun Father to the far corners of the world, Noltus eventually came to the Isle of Dread. He visited Farshore several times, and had several engaging debates with Vesserin, but his true calling lay in bringing the word of Pelor to the remote tribes of the Isle of Dread—tribes even more remote than the Olmans themselves. He left on his mission, hoping to contact lizardfolk, phanatons, and certain reclusive Olman tribes, several months before the PCs arrived in Farshore, and has not been heard of until now. If they ask about Bulgan, Vesserin says that this is Noltus' loyal pet dog.

Vesserin also shows the PCs a stone disc that he keeps in a chest in his quarters. This stone was recovered by Noltus from a ruined shrine several years ago, and was the genesis of his interest in the Isle of Dread. The particular style of carvings matches the style of carvings found on the Olman ruins here on the isle, so it stands to reason it originated here. How it came to be located in the jungle ruin Noltus found it in remains a mystery, but with the use of magical divination, the missionary had been able to determine three points of interest about it that he shared with Vesserin on his last visit to Farshore.

- The disc originated in the ruins of Thanaclan, as evidenced by the distinctive representation of Quetzalcoatl, god of the air, as a serpent coiled through the firmament.
- The three humanoid figures depicted represent Tezcatlipoca (the god of the moon), Tonatiuh (the god of the sun), and Quetzalcoatl in human form holding court over the others.
- The fact that the three deities are depicted as working together (strange, since Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl

To Vesserin Catherly—

My friend, I write you this letter to inform you of a most terrible discovery. Know first that the man who carries this letter is also a friend, and that his skills and techniques for standing against the demonic host may well serve you and the people of the Seven Villages well in the months to come. Learn from him, for what he has to teach is of great value.

But to the news at hand. I had decided to follow up on the Olman tales of the village of Mantru, that isolated tribe dwelling in Thanaclan's shadow atop the plateau. I had hoped to contact this village, to bring the Sun Father's hope to them, for as you will recall, I believe I can use their worship of violent Tonatiuh to my favor. Pelor and this savage deity have more in common than my brethren might admit. The Stone of the Sun and the Moon all but proves it. By showing the villagers of Mantru Pelor's wisdom, I had hoped to civilize them.

Yet from all appearances, Mantru may be lost. You are well aware of the rumors that something dire has taken up residence in the City of Broken Idols. The Seven Villages call the central plateau taboo for strong and true reasons. Yet what dwells on high is no longer content with the ruins of Thanaclan. The man who brings you this letter is proof of this fear, for his tribe was slaughtered by savage heathens from the central plateau. Men who wear the skins of demons, and who kept those they capture alive for unknowable reasons before they return to their lair in the City of Broken Idols.

I have seen evidence of these heathens at work elsewhere, and have even encountered some of their dead. Yet I do not fear them, for no demon can withstand the purity of my convictions. I shall lead my new followers atop the central plateau. We shall deliver the children of Mantru from their oppressors and defeat the fiends. Yet should clouds or the fall of night keep Pelor from my side, and should I fall, know that the evil that broods in the City of Broken Idols does not rest. If you should seek to follow in my footsteps, bring with you the Stone of the Sun and the Moon. I have come to believe that it may hold the key to what destroyed Thanaclan low so long ago.

I do not fear for my own life. Pelor has set me upon this course for a reason. With Bulgan's constant companionship, I am never alone on my quest. But I do fear what these fiends might try if none beyond me take up arms against them. If I do not return, I ask only that you fight as you can, and that this missive be sent on to Lady Gosalar of the Sasserine Dawnhouse as my final testament.

Your Friend,
Noltus Innersol

are enemies), their attentions focused on what appears to be a bow, had long vexed Noltus. He eventually came to believe that the disc was in fact an illustration of a weapon the three deities came together to create, yet he had been unable to discover any legends of such a bow. He suspected that the carving was somehow a map to the location of this ancient weapon.

Both Lavinia and Vesserin encourage the PCs to travel to the central plateau. Vesserin hopes they can find Noltus and perhaps aid him in his quest, while Lavinia suspects that whatever has laid claim to the City of Broken Idols is at the heart of the matter, and that whatever dwells there is the source of the raw materials the koprus were using to create the *shadow pearls*. In any event, if a new source of evil is spreading from the central plateau, it's only a matter of time before these fiend-wearing monsters turn their eyes south.

Although Jakara is willing to teach his secrets to the PCs (possibly allowing some of them to take levels in the totemic demonslayer prestige class, detailed in issue #354 of DRAGON), his interest in taking the battle to the central plateau is much less. If you feel that the PCs could use the extra help, Jakara might agree to accompany them on a journey to this taboo realm, but otherwise his superstitions about the mysterious and forbidden plateau prevent him from offering his aid—he'd rather remain in the vicinity of the Seven Villages to spread the teachings of his tribe.

PART TWO: THE CENTRAL PLATEAU

The central plateau of the Isle of Dread is in many ways entirely different from the surrounding lands. These ghostly, often fog-shrouded heights stand separated from the surrounding landscape by 3,000-foot-high cliffs. Apart from a few forested areas, most of the plateau is covered by rolling grasslands. The ancient city of Thanaclan is no more, although evidence of it can be seen in several places where the remains of ruined stone buildings protrude from under the vines, grass and leaves. The

Central Plateau Encounters

Jungle	Savanah	Ruins	Cliffs	Aquatic	Monster	Avg. EL	Source
—	01–05	—	—	—	2d4 indricotheres	14	*Fiend Folio* 100
01–02	06–07	01–05	—	—	1d4 hezrous	13	*Monster Manual* 44
03–04	08–09	06–10	—	—	1 glabrezu	13	*Monster Manual* 43
05–09	—	—	—	—	1 red sundew	13	*Monster Manual II* 179
—	—	—	—	01–05	2d6 chuuls	13	*Monster Manual* 35
10–14	10–19	11–20	—	—	2d6 skinwalkers	12	Page 84
15–19	20–24	31–35	01–10	06–10	1d6 vrocks	12	*Monster Manual* 48
20–25	—	—	—	—	1d8 treants	12	*Monster Manual* 244
26–27	25–26	36–37	—	—	1 julajimus	12	Page 63
—	27–36	—	—	—	2d4 dire elk	12	*Monster Manual II* 75
28–37	—	38–42	—	—	2d6 bar-lguras	11	*Fiendish Codex I* 29
38–39	37–38	43–44	—	—	1 retriever	11	*Monster Manual* 46
—	39–48	45–55	11–25	11–30	2d4 wyverns	11	*Monster Manual* 259
—	—	56–70	26–40	—	1d4 blackfang rhagodessas	11	*Dungeon* #144
40–49	49–53	71–74	—	—	1d4 megatheriums	10	*Fiend Folio* 124
50–51	54–55	75–76	41–42	—	1 bebelith	10	*Monster Manual* 42
—	—	—	—	31–45	1 kopru behemoth	10	Page 77
52–61	56–65	77–81	—	—	1d6 spectres	10	*Monster Manual* 232
62–63	66–67	—	43–44	—	1 couatl	10	*Monster Manual* 37
64–73	—	—	—	46–55	1 emerald anaconda	10	*Dungeon* #143
74–83	—	—	—	—	2d4 dire boars	9	*Monster Manual* 63
—	68–72	82–86	45–64	56–60	1d2 rocs	9	*Monster Manual* 215
—	—	—	—	61–75	1d12 giant crocodiles	9	*Monster Manual* 271
84–85	73–74	87–90	—	—	1d6 babaus	9	*Monster Manual* 40
86–90	75–80	—	—	—	1d2 dire tigers	8	*Monster Manual* 65
91–95	—	—	65–84	—	1 treeleg spider	8	*Monster Manual* 289 (Gargantuan Spider)
—	—	—	—	76–85	1d4 piranha swarms	7	*Stormwrack* 162
—	81–90	91–95	85–00	86–95	2d4 pteranodons	6	*Dungeon* #143
96–00	91–00	96–00	—	96–00	2d6 Peloran lizardfolk	6	*Monster Manual* 169

ruins are concentrated in a 5-mile-radius around the center of the plateau, extending out along a surviving stretch of the old road that once connected Thanaclan to a great stone causeway that afforded easy access from the plateau to the lowlands beyond.

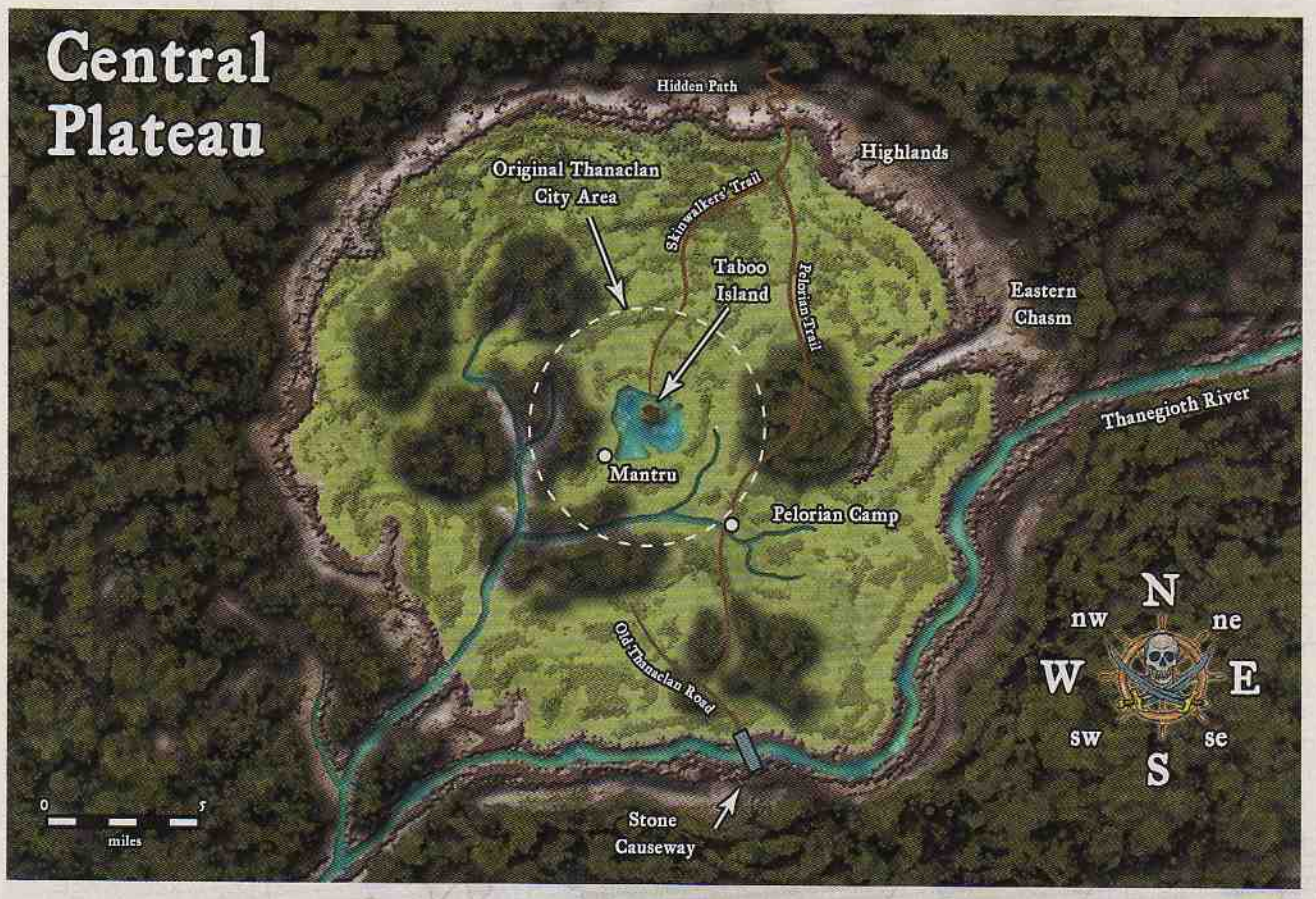
Magic presents the easiest method of reaching the heights of the central plateau, although a few options remain for parties that lack flight or teleportation capabilities. Exploration of the northern cliffs (along with a DC 15 Survival check made in the right area) uncovers a hidden path that leads up the cliffside. Almost directly south of this hidden path, on the other side of the plateau, are the remains of the vast stone causeway that once bridged the gulf that separates the upper ridge of southern mountains from the plateau. This causeway has collapsed in three places, leaving hundred-foot-wide gaps that must be navigated by flight.

The climate is cooler and dryer here, and the isolation afforded by the cliffs has allowed many of the island's indigenous, pre-savage tide megafauna to survive. Yet the recent increased presence of demonic creatures on Taboo Island at the center of the plateau may soon impact these denizens. Check for random encounters four times a day by rolling d%; once at dawn, once at noon, once at dusk, and once at midnight. There's a 10% chance of an encounter occurring. If you roll an encounter with a monster whose stat block is unavailable, simply re-roll your result.

Exploring the Central Plateau

The majority of this adventure takes place in the dungeons below the Great Temple of Thanaclan, now located on the western shore of Taboo Island, yet the PCs may want to explore other locations on the central plateau. Feel free to expand upon this portion of the adventure, incorporating additional ancient ruins or monster lairs as you wish.

Two locations in particular hold important clues or information for the PCs—the hidden Pelorian camp of Noltus Innersol's lizardfolk followers, and the ruined village of Mantru. Locating the ruins of Mantru is a simple task; the village sits on the southwest shore of Broken Lake in the plateau's center. Locating the hidden Pelorian camp is more difficult. The lizardfolk use a faint trail to



come and go, but are careful to keep the trail disguised. At the point where their trail connects to the much more obvious trail left by the skinwalker raiders or to the old Thanaclan road, a DC 30 Survival check is enough to notice the slight pathway leading to the southeast. Once discovered, this trail can be followed with hourly DC 25 Survival checks—eventually it leads to the Pelorian Camp. The PCs can also encounter lizardfolk in the wild—if they befriend them, they can be led back to the camp. Finally, spells like *find the path* work wonders in leading the way to the site, as long as the PCs know what to look for in the first place.

The Pelorian Camp

The lizardfolk followers of Noltus Innersol established a camp near one of the rivers of the plateau, just outside of the ruins of Thanaclan. From there, they've been keeping a close watch on skinwalker activity, and have done what they can to disrupt raiding bands returning to the plateau with droves of captives from the lowlands for sacrifice. Currently led by a lizardfolk chieftain named Rissashtak, the lizardfolk's actual leader is the Peloran missionary Noltus Innersol. The Pelorian camp itself is located on the shore of a shallow bog that feeds into the nearby river. The lizardfolk have constructed nine low mounds that, to the untrained eye, look like nothing more than hummocks rising from a dry patch of land in the bog. A DC 25 Survival check is enough to notice that these hummocks are actually huts camouflaged with mud and peat from the bog.

Led by Rissashtak (who acts as commander in Noltus's absence), the Pelorian lizardfolk now number only 11, down from the initial group of 36 Noltus led up to the central plateau. Conflicts with skinwalker raiders and demons have taken their toll on the zealous but overwhelmed converts. All that keeps them here is the hope that some day soon, they'll be reunited with their beloved leader.

Two lizardfolk remain on watch at all times, nearly submerged in the nearby waters of the bog (+10 circumstance bonus to Hide checks). If they notice the PCs approaching, they sound a conch shell to raise the alarm, at which point Rissashtak and the rest of the band arm themselves and prepare to receive the intruders, while the guards fall back to join their comrades.

When Rissashtak meets the PCs (provided that they do not behave in a hostile manner), he greets them politely in the name of Pelor, and offers them hospitality in the band's hideout. Rissashtak feeds the PCs roasted fish and fresh fruit and asks them several questions about the current conditions of the lowland tribes (Olman, Farshore, and lizardfolk alike). He's particularly interested in any news about skinwalker raids on the lowland.

If the PCs inquire about Noltus Innersol, Rissashtak grows solemn and admits that they haven't heard from Noltus for several days. Their leader left with six lizardfolk scouts and his loyal dog Bulgan on a mission to scout out the ruins of Mantru, but as far as Rissashtak knows, the group never arrived. They've been missing now for nearly five days, and Rissashtak has started to grow anxious.

In any event, Rissashtak invites the PCs to stay at his camp for as long as they wish. At some point before they leave, run the event "Noltus Returns."

Creatures: Rissashtak and his fellow lizardfolk gladly cooperate with the PCs, although they are quite outclassed by the perils the PCs are destined to face during this adventure. The lizardfolk dress and are armed like civilized members of their race, but each wears a wooden holy symbol of Pelor carved in white wood by Noltus himself. Rissashtak (whose name means "rock hard" in Draconic) is a hardy and wise lizardfolk ranger who has been trained by Noltus in the ways of Pelor. Rissashtak's animal companion is a Medium viper named Khuba-Shink

RISSASHTAK **CR 10**
Male lizardfolk ranger 5/cleric 4 (Pelor)
NG Medium humanoid (reptilian)
Monster Manual 169
Init –1; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common, Draconic, Olman

AC 19, touch 9, flat-footed 19
hp 97 (11 HD)
Fort +12, **Ref** +7, **Will** +7

Spd 30 ft.
Melee +1 *morningstar* +11/+6 (1d8+2) and claw +8 (1d4) and bite +8 (1d4)
Ranged +1 *seeking longbow* +9/+4 (1d8+1/×3) or +1 *seeking longbow* +7/+7/+2 (1d8+1/×3)
Base Atk +9; **Grp** +10
Atk Options favored enemy (evil outsiders +4, animals +2)
Special Actions feat of stength 1/day (+4 Str for 1 round), greater turning 1/day, turn undead 4/day (+1, 2d6+5)
Combat Gear scroll of *bless* (2), scroll of *aid* (2)
Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 4th)
2nd—*heat metal*[D] (DC 14), *lesser restoration*, *remove paralysis*, *silence* (DC 14)
1st—*command* (DC 13), *endure elements*, *enlarge person*[D], *entropic shield*, *shield of faith*
0—*detect magic*, *detect poison*, *light*, *mending*, *purify food and drink*
D domain spell; **Domains** strength, sun
Ranger Spell Prepared (CL 2nd)
1st—*magic fang*

Abilities Str 12, Dex 8, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 12
SQ hold breath, spontaneous casting (cure spells), wild empathy +6
Feats Athletic, Combat Casting, Endurance, Multiattack, Rapid Shot, Skill Focus (Survival), Track
Skills Balance +3, Climb +8, Concentration +9, Diplomacy +3, Hide +4, Jump +10, Knowledge (religion) +4, Move Silently +4, Search +5, Swim +12, Survival +10
Possessions combat gear, *+2 studded leather armor*, *+1 morningstar*, *+1 seeking longbow* with 40 arrows, wooden holy symbol of Pelor

Khuba-Shink, Medium viper animal companion: hp 9; *Monster Manual* 280.

Lizardfolk (11): hp 11 each; *Monster Manual* 169.

Noltus Returns (EL 16)

Not long after the PCs reach the Peloran camp, one of the lizardfolk guards rushes into the lair with news—Noltus has returned! The missing missionary and his six scouts (and even his dog!) are on the way up the path to the Pelorian camp—although they look wounded and ragged, they seem to be intact.

The news brings a round of cheers from the Pelorians, and they rush to greet their triumphant leader as he staggers into the camp from the northern trail. What the lizardfolk do not know, however, is that Noltus Innersol was killed only a day ago as he attempted to escape imprisonment on Taboo Island. His body was then consumed by a horrific, shapchanging maurezhi demon named Onailati. Capable of assuming the form and calling upon the memories of his consumed foes, Onailati quickly gained the knowledge of the Pelorian camp's location, something that the previous day of torture at the hands of skinwalker interrogators had failed to procure. Onailati then gathered a group of skinwalkers and his monstrous ally, a simian menace known as a julajimus, to return to the Peloran Camp to finish off the remnants of Noltus' band.

The false Noltus greets Rissashtak warmly as he arrives in the camp, but demands to know who the PCs are. He accepts any story quickly and with grace, but does his best to determine what the PCs' strengths and weaknesses are before springing his trap. He disguises this by attempting to play to their egos, feigning excitement at tales of their previous exploits on the isle. During this scene, there's a chance that the PCs might notice something off about Noltus and his allies, or sense something strange in his words. Make a Sense Motive in secret for each PC, opposed by Onailanti's Bluff check. Also, make a Spot check in secret for each PC, opposed by Disguise checks for Onailanti, the julajimus, and the skinwalker acolyte. PCs who succeed at either roll should notice something strange about the band, perhaps not enough to encourage an immediate attack, but enough to arouse suspicion. They may notice that none of the lizardfolk openly wear their symbols of Pelor, or realize that "Noltus's dog" seems unnaturally keen on following the conversation.

Creatures: The disguised monsters didn't expect to find the PCs in the camp, but they don't abandon their plan to wipe the place out. Instead, Onailanti uses telepathy to coordinate attacks, informing his allies that the PCs are the unknown force here and that they should be the primary targets during the battle to come. The monsters attempt to spread out in the camp so that when they spring their assault, they force the defenders to split their attentions among several different areas.

Onailati is a demonic spy and assassin who has served Khala the Two-Headed for many years. In his true form, he appears as a muscular ghoul with taloned hands, sunken eyes, and a mouthful of sharp teeth.

A julajimus is a hulking monster, 18 feet tall and akin to a massive baboon in appearance. Its arms are long and muscular, possessing additional joints along their length, and its maw is oversized and filled with immense teeth. A julajimus can hide its monstrous form by transforming into a Small or smaller animal, and while most julajimuses are paralyzed by sunlight, this particular one wears a *ring of freedom of movement* supplied by his maurhezi ally.

The five skinwalkers are led by a skinwalker acolyte, a sorcerer who has

discovered vile methods of enhancing his connections to his demonic skin by becoming an acolyte of the skin. The skinwalker acolyte has disguised himself and his five allies as lizardfolk by using a scroll of *seeming*. Skinwalkers are detailed in full in the Appendix.

ONAILATI **CR 12**

Male advanced elite maurezhi demon
CE Medium outsider (chaotic, evil, extrapanar, shapechanger, tanar'ri)
Fiend Folio 50

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., deathwatch; Listen +20, Spot +20
Languages all; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 28, touch 15, flat-footed 25
hp 142 (15 HD); **DR** 10/good
Immune electricity, poison
Resist acid 10, cold 10, fir 10; **SR** 22
Fort +14, **Ref** +12, **Will** +9

Spd 40 ft.
Melee* *+1 disruption heavy mace* +19/+14/+9 (1d8+14) and
claw +16 (1d6+9 plus paralysis) and
bite +16 (1d4+9 plus paralysis)
Base Atk +15; **Grp** +23
Atk Options Power Attack, pounce
Special Actions consume, *summon creatures*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th)
At will—*animate dead*, *blur*, *cause fear* (DC 16), *chill touch*, *death knell* (DC 17), *hold person* (DC 17), *invisibility*
3/day—quickened *death knell* (DC 17), *fear* (DC 19)
*5-point Power Attack

Abilities Str 27, Dex 16, Con 20, Int 19, Wis 10, Cha 21
SQ assume shape
Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*death knell*), Skill Focus (Bluff)
Skills Bluff +23, Craft (sculpture) +10, Diplomacy +15, Disguise +22 (+34 in alternate form), Hide +21, Intimidate +13, Jump +41, Knowledge (religion) +11, Knowledge (the planes) +10, Listen +20, Move Silently +19, Spot +20
Possessions *+1 disruption heavy mace*, clerical vestments, wooden holy symbol of Pelor

Assume Shape (Su) Onailati can take on the appearance of any humanoid creature whose corpse he has consumed. This ability otherwise functions as *alter self*, except that he may remain in the chosen form indefinitely. He may assume a new form or return to his own as a standard action.

Deathwatch (Sp) Onailati gains the benefits of a constant *deathwatch* spell (CL 20th). It can be dispelled, but automatically activates again on his next turn.

Consume (Su) Onailati gains power by consuming the body of a sentient living creature. He must begin eating the corpse within 10 minutes of its death and requires 30 minutes to complete the consumption. A creature consumed in this way cannot be restored to life except via *wish*, *miracle*, or *true resurrection*, and even then there's a 50% chance that each attempt fails. If he devours the corpse of a humanoid creature whose Hit Dice or class levels are at least half of his current Hit Dice, Onailati advances in power, gaining one Hit Die, a +1 natural armor bonus, and a +1 bonus to his Strength and Intelligence. More details on maurezhi advancement can be found on page 51 of the *Fiend Folio* if they become necessary for play.

Paralysis (Ex) Any creature hit by Onailati's bite or claw attack must make a DC 22 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1d6+4 minutes.

Pounce (Ex) If Onailati charges, he can make a full attack even though he has moved.

Summon Creatures (Sp) Once per day, Onailati can summon 1d4 ghouls with a 100% chance of success or 2d4 dretches with a 60% chance of success. Summoned creatures remain for 1 hour before vanishing.

JULAJIMUS **CR 12**

NE Huge aberration (shapechanger)

Monster Manual II 133

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +10, Spot +10

Aura fear (20 feet, Will DC 20)

Languages Olman

AC 22, touch 10, flat-footed 20

hp 152 (16 HD); **DR** 10/magic

Immune enchantment magic

Resist fire 10

Fort +10, **Ref** +7, **Will** +10

Weakness sunlight vulnerability

Spd 50 ft.

Melee* bite +17 (3d10+12) and 2 claws +15 (3d8+7)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +12; **Grp** +29

Atk Options Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, stunning

Special Actions alternate form, roar

*3-point Power Attack

Abilities Str 28, Dex 15, Con 20, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 15

Feats Improved Initiative, Improved Bull Rush, Multiattack, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bite, claw)

Skills Climb +18, Disguise +12 (+22 when in alternate form), Intimidate +10, Jump +27, Listen +10, Spot +10

Possessions *ring of freedom of movement*

Alternate Form (Su) At will, a julajimus can assume the form of a Small or smaller animal. It often chooses the form of a creature like a kitten or rabbit to lure its enemies into a false sense of security. It can reassume its true form as a free action.

Fear Aura (Su) Any living creature within 20 feet of a julajimus in its true form must make a DC 20 Will save or become frightened. A creature that saves successfully against this effect is immune to it for 24 hours. Each round, a frightened creature gains a new saving throw at the same DC to resist the effect. This is a mind-affecting fear affect.

Roar (Su) Three times a day a julajimus can loose an ear-splitting roar that can be heard for miles. Every creature within 60 feet must make a DC 23 Fortitude save or become deafened for 3d6 hours and take 6d6 points of nonlethal sonic damage.

Stunning (Su) If a julajimus scores a critical hit with a claw, its opponent must make a DC 23 Fortitude save or be stunned for 1d4 rounds.

Sunlight Vulnerabiilty (Ex) A julajimus becomes paralyzed when exposed to sunlight; each round, it can resist paralysis with a DC 20 Fortitude save, but once it fails its save it becomes paralyzed until 1d4 rounds after the exposure to sunlight ends. Note that with its *ring of freedom of movement*, this julajimus is able to move about in sunlight with ease.

SKINWALKER ACOLYTE **CR 13**

Male skinwalker sorcerer 9/acolyte of the skin 2

CE Medium outsider (native)

Complete Arcane 19
Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Listen +17, Spot +14
Languages Abyssal, Olman

AC 27, touch 18, flat-footed 21
hp 200 (19 HD); **DR** 10/magic
Immune fear, poison
Resist fire 10; **SR** 15
Fort +19, **Ref** +15, **Will** +18

Spd 40 ft.
Melee +1 *dagger* +20/+15/+10 (1d4+3/19–20 plus poison) and
2 claws +17 (1d6+1 plus poison) and
bite +17 (1d8+1 plus poison)
Ranged +1 *composite longbow* +20/+15/+10 (1d8+2/×3 plus poison)
Base Atk +13; **Grp** +15
Atk Options pounce
Combat Gear *lesser rod of empower metamagic*, violet fungus venom (10 doses)
Spells Known (CL 10th, +18 ranged touch)
5th (4/day)—*feeblemind* (DC 21)
4th (6/day)—*charm monster* (DC 20), *lesser geas* (DC 20)
3rd (7/day)—*dispel magic*, *fireball* (DC 19), *fly*
2nd (8/day)—*invisibility*, *scorching ray*, *resist energy*, *whispering wind*
1st (8/day)—*alarm*, *disguise self* (DC 17), *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement*
0 (6/day)—*acid splash*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 16), *mending*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 12), *read magic*, *resistance*
Spell-Like Ability (CL 8th)
1/day—*poison* (DC 20)

Abilities Str 14, Dex 22, Con 24, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 22
SQ summon familiar (bat), telepathic link, wear fiend
Feats Combat Casting, Craft Rod, Empower Spell, Extend Spell, Multiattack, Track, Weapon Finesse
Skills Concentration +20, Craft (poisonmaking) +11, Disguise +6 (+16 with *seeming* scroll), Jump +25, Hide +25, Knowledge (the planes) +11, Listen +17, Move Silently +25, Spot +14, Survival +14
Possessions combat gear, +1 *dagger*, +1 *composite longbow* (+2 Str) with 20 arrows, *ring of protection +2*, *cloak of Charisma +2*

Wear Fiend (Ex) The skinwalker acolyte's bond with his jarilith skin is stronger than those of typical skinwalkers. His natural armor bonus increases by +1 and he gains a +2 inherent bonus to his Dexterity.

Skinwalkers (5): hp 76 each; see Appendix.

Tactics: When Onailati gives the telepathic order to attack, he and his allies attempt to follow the tactics outlined here. Before giving the order, he telepathically orders his julajimus minion (still in bloodhound form) to approach one of the PCs and begin affectionately licking him. Onailati then makes sure he's at least 25 feet away, so he won't be affected by the monster's fear aura when it reverts to its true from.

Round 1: The julajimus reverts to its true form as a free action and takes a full attack on the PC it was licking. Its fear aura activates, but remember that any skinwalkers in the area are immune to fear. The skinwalkers move to attack the nearest lizardfolk, initially leaving the PCs to their more powerful allies. The skinwalker acolyte casts *feeblemind* on a spellcaster. Onailati cries out in distress, attempting to carry on his charade a bit longer. He then casts *invisibility* on himself.

Round 2: The julajimus continues to attack its target. Skinwalkers move on to the PCs, focusing their attacks on anyone not directly engaged with the julajimus. The acolyte casts *fly* and retreats into the air. Noltus takes a standard action to assume his true form and then moves to stand over a dying lizardfolk.

Round 3: The julajimus continues its attack. Skinwalkers move to focus their attacks on one PC, and the acolyte casts an empowered *fireball* down at the others. Onailati casts a quickened *death knell* followed by *animate dead* on the lizardfolk to create a zombie and moves to the next closet dead or dying body.

Additional Rounds: The enemies continue these tactics until the acolyte is slain or Onailati is exposed. If the acolyte is slain, the skinwalkers focus their attacks on whoever dealt the killing blow. If onailati is exposed, he summons 1d4 ghouls and engages the PCs in melee.

Retreat: The skinwalkers are fanatic, and fight to the death. The julajimus has been ordered not to roar unless Onailati gives it leave to do so (which he does as soon as it looks like the PCs are going to win the battle), but if reduced to 40 or fewer hit points it roars anyway. It attempts to flee if reduced to less than 20 hit points. Onailati *teleports* back to Taboo Island to report his failure to Khala if both the julajimus and the acolyte are slain, or if he's reduced to less than 30 hit points.

Development: If Onailati reports to Khala the Two-Headed, the aspect prepares the island for the PCs—this adventure assumes that this occurs, so if the PCs manage to defeat Onailati before he can escape, you should make the appropriate adjustments to the encounters within the Great Temple.

If the PCs head straight to the Great Temple, you should consider having Onailati's disguised band encounter the PCs just before they attempt to enter the dungeon or cross Broken Lake—strive to have this encounter be the first major event that occurs in the adventure.

Mantru (EL 14)

The small village of Mantru is located on the southwestern shore of Broken Lake, near the heart of ruined Thanaclan. Mantru was inhabited by about 50 Olman fishermen and farmers, and had long been under the indirect contol of the kopru. Yet only a few months ago, when the skinwalkers began their push into the outlying areas, the village was overtaken as the cult needed more sacrifices to create more *shadow pearls*. The kopru rankled at this move, which they viewed as shortsighted, yet they knew better than to openly oppose the dictates of their demonic lord.

Those of Mantru's inhabitants who weren't killed were dragged to the Great Temple to meet an even more terrible fate at Khala's hand. Both Fano, the village chief, and Umlat, the tribal cleric, lost their lives when they attempted to lead a defense against the skinwalker invasion. Yet Umlat was a priest of Quetzalcoatl, and his death has attracted the attention of several of the deity's legendary servants, a troop of four couatls. These outsiders have flown to Mantru to honor Umlat and defend his body from profanation and beasts, yet realize that they lack the power to directly oppose Khala. Their lord, the god of the air, has granted these four couatls a vision, and they now know that heroes will come to Mantru soon.

Mantru is located on the shore of the lake, and consists of eight thatched lodges of various sizes, two of which are built on stilted platforms out in the lake. The village is now abandoned, but shows no signs of struggle or destruction, for the couatls have taken the time to cleanse the village of the remains of battle.

Umlat tried to defend himself with his spells, but was overpowered and killed by Onailati. Strangely enough, while all of the other bodies (both living and dead) were taken back to the Great Temple, Umlat's corpse was forgotten by his killers. The couatls have placed his body in his lodge, and have staved off corruption through the use of *gentle repose* spells. They now wait for someone to visit it before carrying it to a sacred graveyard in the afterlife.

Creatures: When the party enters Mantru, the couatls notice them quickly. Two of the four become visible and address the party using telepathy. The couatls explain that they have come to Mantru to pay homage to the mortal remains of Umlat, the last priest of Mantru and child of Quetzalcoatl, father of the firmament and the giver of Law. They further explain that while Umlat was recently killed by a demon, his killer left the body untouched. Now, the couatls must keep watch on him "until worthy heroes come to bid Umlat the farewell he deserves." If the PCs ask about the village, the couatls say that everyone in Mantru has disappeared, and only the priest corpse was left behind by whatever wiped out everyone else in one night. If the PCs ask to see the corpse, the couatls say that the Umlat's body is taboo for them as well, unless they can demonstrate that they are worthy enough to bid the priest the last farewell. The couatls have been told they shall know these heroes, for they will have the answer to one of the Law Giver's favorite riddles. The couatls are eager to give the riddle to the PCs, as they hope they are the heroes they await.

I came back from the land of the lodestone's scorn.

I came back with the sun when the sky was new born,

I came back in the shadow as the day met its end,

What one place in four have I never been?

The answer is "the north" (the first line referencing the south, the second being the east, and the third being the west). The couatls are gracious enough to allow each PC to guess, but no more than once per PC. If the PCs solve the riddle, they are taken to where Umlat's corpse lies on a bed of fresh flowers picked by the couatls. The corpse bears deep claw marks on the neck (inflicted by Onailati). A few moments after the PCs reach the priest's body, with the four couatls looking on, a ghostly form rises from the corpse. Umlat's spirit has returned to thank the PCs and to warn them of what lies ahead, yet he does not volunter information. The spirit speaks only in Olman, and only to answer questions. He answers one question per PC before fading away forever. Information that Umlat can share includes the following facts.

- In death, Umlat finally understood that the whole village, including himself, had been under the subtle influence of the koprus of Taboo Island, who kept the inhabitants of Mantru in an unaware state of servitude. Every once in a while, the koprus picked up Mantru's best warriors with their domination ability and used them as guards of the western entrance to Taboo Temple.
- The village was attacked by a band of fiendish savages who wore demonic lion skins. Umlat recognized several of the savages as former young warriors of Mantru who rebelled against the elders and escaped to Taboo Island under the influence of the koprus.
- The leader of the attackers was a horrible watery demon with bulbous yellow-orange eyes. The demon observed the attack from the lake and killed Fano with a lethal rune. A DC 25 Knowledge (the planes) check identifies the demon as a wastrilith, and a DC 25 Spellcraft check identifies the rune as a *symbol of death*.
- Umlat was killed by a powerful demon-ghoul, which paralyzed him and broke his neck. The PCs might have already seen Onailati, or they can identify a maurezhi with a DC 25 Knowledge check.

After the PCs have bid farewell to Umlat, the couatls bear up his body and thank the PCs. They agree to cast any spells upon the party to heal their wounds or otherwise aid them, but when they are done, they *plane shift* away to Quetzalcoatl's realm.

Couatls (4): hp 58 each; *Monster Manual* 37.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: If the PCs answer the riddle and learn what they can from Umlat, give them a CR 14 experience award.

PART TWO: TABOO TEMPLE

The center of the plateau, once the heart of Thanaclan theocracy, is now taboo to the Olmans. The lake that surrounded the Great Temple expanded over the centuries to slowly swallow and flood much of the ruins. Known to those few who have seen it as Broken Lake, it blocks easy access to the ruins of the Great Temple, an underground complex built into the bedrock of the lake's only distinguishing feature—Taboo Island.

The first thing visitors approaching Taboo Island notice are the sharp, 200-foot-high ridges of blackish rock that block access to much of the island's western shores. The island itself slopes down to the southwest, creating a triangular profile dotted with ancient ziggurats and half-crumbled statues. It is these once-proud but now broken idols of ancient kings and deities that give the ruins their common name.

Approaching Taboo Island (EL 15)

Enough outrigger canoes remain tethered to the low piers at the ruins of Mantru for the PCs to paddle to the island. Strong swimmers may even wish to swim out to it. The safest route to reach Taboo Island, though, is via flight or teleportation, for the waters of Broken Lake hide a particularly dangerous threat.

Creatures: Giant crocodiles are common along the outer shores of Broken Lake, but even they avoid the central depths. It is here that Broken Lake's undisputed king lives, an immense crocodile known as a

deinosuchus. At just over sixty feet in length, the immense predator is viewed as a boon by Khala and his skinwalkers, and regular applications of *charm monster* by skinwalker acolytes have made the beast their staunch ally.

If the PCs attempt to swim or boat out to Taboo Island, they are spotted and attacked by the titanic monster before they reach the island. The deinosuchus emerges suddenly from below, gaining a +10 cover bonus to its Hide check against foes above the water's surface as it approaches, for a total of +21 Hide. If the PCs avoid this peril via flight or teleporation, you can have them encounter the deinosuchus any time they stray too close to the water's edge as they explore the island. If they defeat the guardian at area **1**, they may even find the deinosuchus has moved into this area if they return at a later date.

DEINOSUCHUS **CR 15**
Titanic elite crocodile
N Gargantuan animal
Monster Manual 271, *Monster Manual II* 217
Init +4; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +4, Spot +18
AC 26, touch 6, flat-footed 26
hp 412 (25 HD)
Fort +28, **Ref** +14, **Will** +16
Spd 20 ft., swim 30 ft.
Melee* bite +23 (6d6+29/19–20) or tail slap +23 (8d6+29/19–20)
Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.
Base Atk +18; **Grp** +49
Atk Options improved grab (bite)
Special Action trample 3d8+28 (DC 41)
*10-point Power Attack
Abilities Str 49, Dex 11, Con 34, Int 1, Wis 14, Cha 2
SQ hold breath
Feats Alertness, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (bite, tail slap), Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite, tail slap), Power Attack, Skill Focus (Hide), Stealthy
Skills Hide +7 (+11 in water), Listen +4, Move Silently +2, Spot +18, Swim +27

Taboo Island

The ruins of ancient Thanaclan are still evident on Taboo Island, with the vine-covered remnants of terraced buildings stubbornly resisting the jungle's reclamation. Once the houses of Olman nobility, they now serve as lairs for several tribes of skinwalkers. Among the broken idols and houses stand four ziggurats, the only structures to rise completely above the tree level. These four pyramids are identical 70-foot-tall structures of granite whose tops are accessible via steep flights of stairs. Elsewhere on the island stand four relatively new statues of Demogorgon. Built by the skinwalkers, these life-sized, crude renderings are kept clear of vegetation by the cultists that hold them sacred.

Exploration of Taboo Island should reveal to the PCs that there is little to challenge them here. Any wandering encounters on the island are with a band of 2d4 skinwalkers 50% of the time; otherwise, you can determine what is encountered by rolling on the Ruins column of the table on page 59.

Each of the skinwalker tribes consists of a cluster of huts and small caves dug at the feet of large trees. Hidden paths, navigable with DC 25 Survival checks, allow easier access to these thorps than hacking through the overgrown ruins. Each thorp is home to a dozen skinwalkers led by a skinwalker acolyte.

Taboo Temple

Whether the PCs learn of its import from captured skinwalkers or Umlat's spirt, are guided there by divination magic, or simply discover it on their own, the most significant region of Taboo Island is the ruins of the Great Temple of Thanaclan. Known once as Taboo Temple to the villagers of Mantru, the skinwalkers and kopru that now control its lower reaches have taken a liking to the name.

Several entrances into the temple are possible. From the west, the most obvious is area **1**, while from the east, this honor falls to area **17**. Area **21** is unlikely to be discovered from outside, but can serve well as an escape route. The most obscure entrance is via the underground shaft from Golismorga, deep below the Isle of Dread. This entrance (area **25**) might serve PCs who discovered the shaft in "The Lightless Depths" as an excellent back door into the temple.

Unless noted otherwise, the rooms in the temple have 10-foot-high ceilings and are dark—most of the temple's denizens can see perfectly well in the blackness. The air in the dungeon, while breathable, is uncomfortably damp and foul-smelling. The regular eruption of the geysers in area **40** can be felt throughout the complex as a low rumble and a faint trembling in the stone floor. From time to time, these subtle tremors are accompanied by a faint smell of brimstone and ammonia. Wood rots quickly in these environs, and as a result many doorways stand empty. In the section of the dungeon inhabited by the skinwalkers, wooden doors are replaced and maintained regularly, but are still swollen with moisture and prone to sticking. These doors (found in areas 3–8) can be opened with a DC 15 Strength check. Elsewhere in the dungeon, stone doors remain stout and functional.

1. Xerkamat's Lair (EL 15)

A great entrance opens on the west side of the cliff, ninety feet wide and just as tall. The red marble walls within are lined with carvings depicting strange gods and ferocious animals. A pair of crude wooden piers extends over the waters of the lake from the entrance, where three canoes are tethered. A net stretched over a half-dozen thick pilings protects the approach, forming a semicircle around the stone landing.

The nets rigged around the approach are regularly warded with *alarm* spells cast by skinwalker acolytes. Only by speaking the passphrase ("Khala rules now where man ruled once") can the alarm be bypassed; otherwise, any attempt to tamper with or move through the netting triggers a shrill howling. This howling can be heard clearly as far as area **3**.

A submerged entrance to area **28** opens into the waters of the lake to the south of these piers.

Creature: Although to casual observation this entrance may appear abandoned, it is in fact under the constant watchful eye of a powerful aquatic demon sent here by Demogorgon to serve his aspect, Khala, and to ensure that the lakeward route to the temple is amply protected.

This demon is Xerkamat, an eel-like monster known as a wastrilith. The wastrilith is bound to Khala the Two-Headed by a powerful and unholy pact that allows the aspect to observe the world through his eyes and use him as a focus for his spell-like abilities, making the demon even more dangerous than normal.

XERKAMAT **CR 15**

Advanced elite wastrilith demon
CE Huge outsider (aquatic, chaotic, evil extraplanar)
Fiend Folio 55
Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +24, Spot +24
Languages Abyssal, Aquan, Common; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 26, touch 13, flat-footed 21; Dodge, Mobility
hp 230 (20 HD)
Immune cold, water-based attacks
SR 20
Fort +19, **Ref** +19, **Will** +15
Weakness vulnerable to fire

Spd 30 ft., swim 80 ft.
Melee bite +29 (2d6+11) and 2 claws +24 (2d4+5)
Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.
Base Atk +20; **Grp** +39
Atk Options Spring Attack
Special Actions breath weapon, *symbol*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th)
At will—*blasphemy*, *control water*, *deeper darkness*, *desecrate*, *detect good*, *detect law*, *fear* (DC 20), *greater dispel magic*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only), *read magic*, *suggestion* (DC 19), *telekinesis* (DC 21), *tongues* (self only), *unhallow*, *unholy blight* (DC 20), *wall of ice*
3/day—*unholy aura* (DC 24)

Abilities Str 32, Dex 20, Con 24, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 22
SQ break summoning, water mastery
Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Spring Attack
Skills Bluff +29, Concentration +30, Hide +20, Intimidate +39, Knowledge (the planes) +24, Listen +24, Move Silently +28, Spot +24, Swim +42

Break Summoning (Ex) A wastrilith can be summoned using a *summon monster IX* spell, but it can make an opposed Wisdom check to break free of the summoning.
Breath Weapon (Su) Cone of boiling water, 3d10 points of fire damage, 60 foot cone, once every 1d4 rounds; Reflex DC 27 half.
Symbol (Sp) Up to three times a day, a wastrilith can create any *symbol* as a spell-like ability (CL 15th).
Water Mastery (Ex) A wastrilith gains a +1 bonus on attack rolls and damage rolls against opponents who are touching water.

Tactics: When Xerkamat notices the PCs, he immediately informs Khala via the telepathic link he shares with the demon lord's aspect. Khala activates the link between them to observe through Xerkamat's senses while the wastrilith takes the time to cast *unholy aura* on himself, while Khala casts *fly* on him through the link. One round later, Khala uses *project image* to create an illusion of the wastrilith that confronts the intruding PCs. Xerkamat may use his spell-like abilities through this image, but Khala cannot (his link is with Xerkamat, not the image). Xerkamat remains 20 feet underwater until the image is dispelled

or the PCs attempt to flee toward area **2**, at which point he surges up to attack them in melee.

Xerkamat fights until reduced to less than 30 hit points, at which time he teleports to the depths of Broken Lake to recover—Khala wants to keep the wastrilith alive if he can, for as long as it lives the aspect has a handy escape route if things turn grim when the PCs finally encounter him.

2. Temple Entrance (EL 9)

A monumental stairway climbs to a wide landing with an archway set in the east wall. Pillars decorated with abstract and intricate carvings support the ceiling of the chamber. In the middle of the cave, two square pedestals to either side of the center steps of the stairway support the feet and ankles of a collapsed statue that once straddled the stairs. Some of the statue's features are still recognizable in the heaps of rubble scattered on the stairway, most noticeably the feathered texture of a huge pair of wings. To either side of the passageway to the east leer two bas-reliefs of men with feathered headdresses. The one to the north shows a man with a brilliant sun over his head, while to the south is a man beneath a smoking moon.

A DC 20 Knowledge (religion) check identifies the collapsed statue as Quetzalcoatl and the bas-relief figures as Tezcatlipoca (moon) and Tonatiuh (sun). A DC 30 Search of the bas-relief of Tonatiuh reveals a cleverly-hidden peephole in the carving's left eye that, if peered through, reveals a hallway beyond the carving. A lone skinwalker typically stands guard here, watching area **2** for intruders that manage to bypass the *alarm* net and the wastrilith.

Trap: The wastrilith has placed a *symbol of death* on the floor just before the entrance to the passageway leading to area **3**. The skinwalkers are attuned to the symbol, and when they bring prisoners they're careful to cover their heads with hoods to prevent premature sacrifices. The symbol activates as soon as any nonevil creature reads it; it does not activate if it's simply walked over.

***Symbol of Death*:** CR 9; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*symbol of death*, 15th-level sorcerer, DC 24); Search DC 33; Disable Device DC 33.

3. Main Chamber (EL 13–17)

A blazing fire burns under a rectangular hole in the sixty-foot-tall ceiling of this large chamber. Just north and south of the entrance, flights of stairs lead up to balconies that run along the room's sides at a height of fifteen feet. Wooden doors are set into the far walls of both balconies. A man-sized stone visage, its mouth agape, serves as the entrance to a passage beyond. The face has been badly cut and defaced.

While most of the skinwalkers of the central plateau are nomads and sleep in different camps each night, the primary tribe dwells here. They use this chamber as a main living area, cooking fish-based meals on the fire when living human flesh is not available to satiate their demonic appetites. Unless the PCs have been particularly stealthy, they'll be confronted by the main force of the skinwalkers here in a battle that may well take multiple assaults to win.

The hole above the central fire pit emerges from the rocky ridge overhead, where its periodic smoke appears no different from any of the other numerous volcanic vents along Taboo Island's western ridge. The shaft itself extends 180 feet before reaching its exit, and can be scaled with a DC 25 Climb check.

The fifteen-foot-tall face over the east passage is hollow, containing enough space above the passageway for a single creature to hide and observe area **3**. Openings in the face's eyes are visible with a DC 20 Spot check.

The two secret doors on the balconies are of stone, and can be discovered with a DC 25 Search check.

Creatures: The skinwalker tribe that dwells here numbers 15 in all, including two skinwalker acolytes and Chief Achcauhtli. If the PCs battle them all at once, the resulting EL 17 encounter may be too much for them to handle. Fortunately, the Chief expects his warriors to handle any invasions on their own and does not immediately join battle here.

If the PCs arrive without alerting the complex, they find 2d4 skinwalkers relaxing in this chamber. One more remains on guard in area **6**, and most of the others are found sleeping in areas **4A** and **4B**. Both acolytes are in area **5**, while one last skinwalker (the Chieftain's consort) is with Achcauhtli in area **7**.

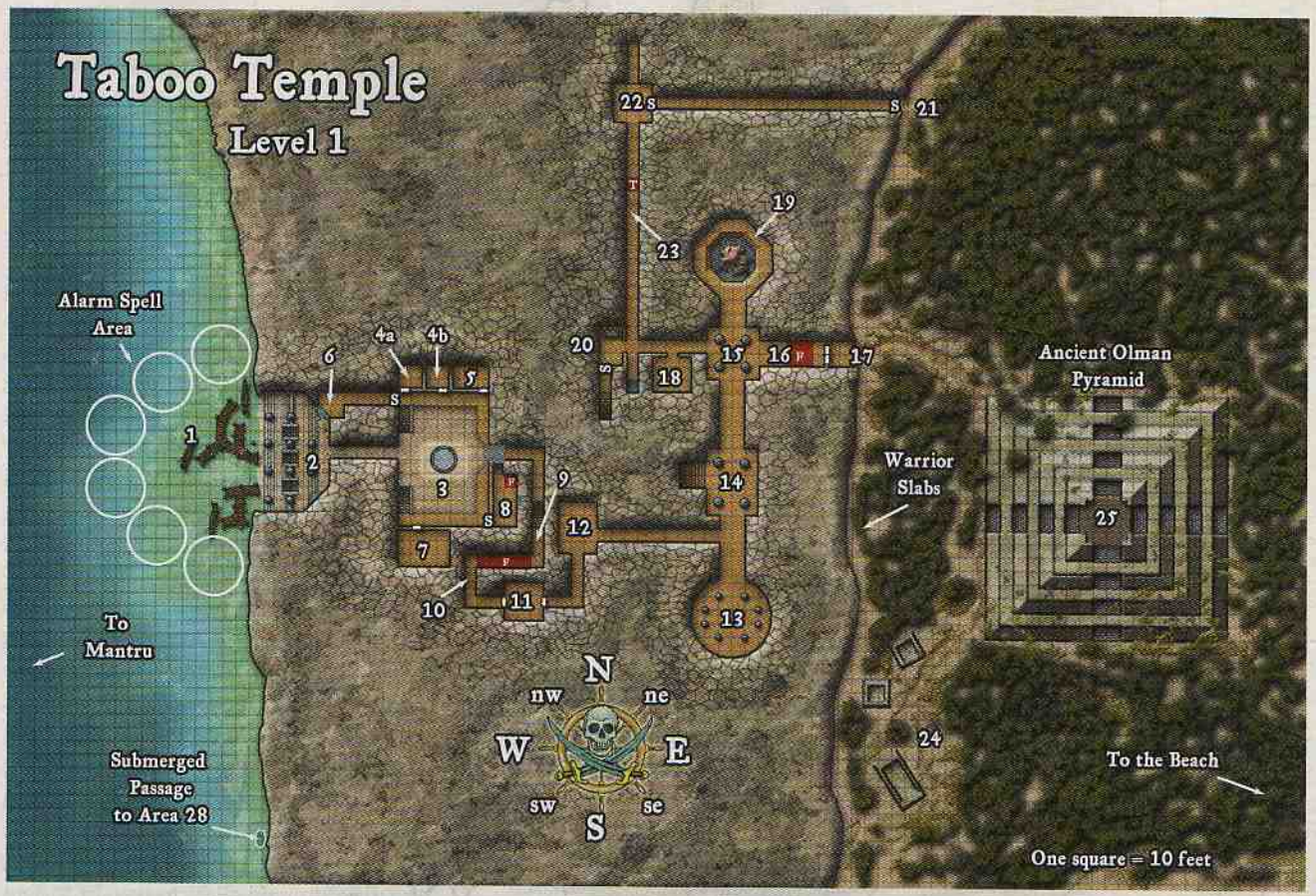
If the skinwalkers are expecting the PCs, all 12 wait in here. Four of them wait in the lower area betwen the entrance and the fire pit, while four more stand on each of the two balconies, armed with longbows. One of the acolytes hides inside of the stone head, while the second remains at the Chieftain's side in area **7**.

Chief Achcauhtli **CR 15**
Male skinwalker ranger 9
CE Medium outsider (native)
Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Listen +18, Spot +18
Languages Abyssal, Olman

AC 27, touch 14, flat-footed 23
hp 229 (17 HD); **DR** 10/magic
Immune fear, poison
SR 15
Fort +20, **Ref** +16, **Will** +10; evasion

Spd 40 ft.
Melee +2 *flaming burst macuahuitl* +23/+18/+13/+8 (1d8+7/17–20 plus 1d6 fire) and
+2 *bashing light wooden shield* +21/+16 (1d8+3) and
2 claws +19 (1d6+2 plus poison) and bite +19 (1d8+2 plus poison)
Ranged +1 *composite longbow* +22/+17/+12/+7 (1d8+6/×3 plus poison)
Base Atk +17; **Grp** +22
Atk Options favored enemy (humans +4, animals +2), pounce
Combat Gear violet fungus venom (10 doses)
Spells Prepared (CL 4th)
1st—*longstrider, resist energy*

Abilities Str 21, Dex 18, Con 26, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 16
SQ animal companion, swift tracker, telepathic link, wild empathy +12, woodland stride
Feats Endurance, Improved Critical (macuahuitl), Improved Initiative, Improved Shield Bash, Improved Toughness (+1 hp/HD), Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Multiattack, Track,



Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (macuahuitl)

Skills Concentration +19, Craft (poisonmaking) +11, Hide +29, Jump +34, Listen +18, Move Silently +29, Spot +18, Survival +18

Possessions *+2 bashing light wooden shield, +2 flaming burst macuahuitl, +1 composite longbow* (+5 Str) with 20 arrows, *belt of giant strength +4, bracers of armor +4, amulet of natural armor +2*

Eztli, ape animal companion: hp 29; *Monster Manual* 268.

Skinwalker Acolytes (2): hp 200 each; see page 64.

Skinwalkers (12): hp 76 each; see Appendix.

Tactics: The four skinwalkers on the floor do their best to prevent intruders from pressing far into the room while the archers on the balconies provide covering fire. As melee fighters below drop, archers leap down from the balconies to olster their ranks.

The acolyte hiding within the stone head receives the benefits of near total cover (+8 AC, +4 Reflex), and supports his kin by casting his ranged spells through the peepholes at targets below.

Once four skinwalkers are slain, the surviviors howl in rage—this din is enough to call the Chieftain, his ape animal companion, and the second acolyte into the battle. The second acolyte remains on the balcony to cast spells while Chief Achcauhtli leaps off the balcony to engage the most wounded of the PCs.

Development: As long as Chief Achcauhtli lives, the skinwalkers do not abandon this post. If the Chief is slain, the remaining skinwalkers fight until reduced to less than 20 hit points, at which point they try to flee.

4. Barracks

This room is lined with mats and furnished with fur beds and crocodile skin rugs. Ornaments of bones, feathers, and fish scales hang on the walls. Unfinished bows, arrows, and spears rest on the floor. A clay brazier in the middle sheds a soft light. The air reeks of grease, smoke, brimstone, and sweat.

Treasure: Although areas 4A and 4B are very similar, and share the same general contents, one bedding in area 4A hides a pouch containing some of the demonfolk tribe's treasure. This pouch can be found with a DC 20 Search check, and contains 55 shards of black obsidian worth 10 gp each and 5 amethysts worth 100 gp each.

5. Acolyte's Shrine

The walls of this grim room are decorated with stretched skins, most of which seem to have been harvested from men and women. The gruesome trophies are painted with twisting, coiling runes. A bloodstained stone block sits in the center of the room, a half-dozen obsidian knives glittering atop it. Mounds of furs line the west section of the room, and sitting amid them is a battered stone coffer.

This room serves the skinwalker acolytes as a shrine, barracks, and workshop. The runes on the wall skins are prayers to Demogorgon, written in Abyssal.

Treasure: A trunk in room **4B** contains five colorful feathered cloaks with large ivory clasps worth 50 gp each, six golden bowls worth 200 gp each, and four golden chalices shaped like skulls with black opal eyes and obsidian teeth worth 500 gp each.

6. Secret Viewing Chamber (EL 6)

A stool sits before an array of stone levers near a peephole in the southwest corner.

This room was once used to observe the main west entrance to the temple.

Creature: A skinwalker is constantly stationed here to keep watch on the west entrance, although he quickly abandons this post to join his kin in area **3** once it becomes apparent that the temple has been invaded.

Skinwalker: hp 76; see Appendix.

7. Chief's Quarters

A single, luxurious bedding of tiger furs sits against the middle of the west wall. A wooden trunk rests at the foot of the bed, while a dozen colorful wooden shields decorated with large and brilliant feathers hang from or lean against the west walls. A large clay jug emanating a spicy, alcoholic smell sits in the northeast corner.

The skinwalker chief is unlikely to be encountered here in his quarters, but if the PCs manage to reach this far without raising the alarm, they may find him and one of his skinwalker consorts here.

Treasure: The trunk near the chief's bed contains nine 1-foot-tall ivory statuettes of ancient Olman spirits worth 70 gp each, an ancient Olman priest's bronze mask encrusted with lapis lazuli and malachite worth 1,100 gp, a golden ritual scepter with a moon-shaped sapphire at the head worth 1,450 gp, two *potions of cure moderate wounds*, and *pipes of pain* carved in the shape of a feathered snake.

8. Priest's Chamber

This room is bare of furniture with the exception of a few stone benches along the wall, and a heavy layer of dust and fine sand covers the floor. A steep flight of steps in the northwest corner leads up to a narrow platform, and a trail of footprints winds through the dust between the steps and the southwest corner.

Ancient Olman priests used this room to meditate and observe worshippers in area **3**. The dust and sand on the floor covers a stone trapdoor in the northeast corner of the room that has remained undiscovered by the skinwalkers. A DC 30 Search check reveals its location (DC 20 if the sand is cleared away). The trap door hasn't been opened in ages, and requires a DC 25 Strength check to reveal a 20-foot drop into area **33** below.

9. Breached Wall

A flight of steps descends to a man-sized breach in a makeshift wall.

This passage was walled up by surviving Olman priests in a desperate attempt to contain invading kopru during the first savage tide. The wall was breached many years ago when a skinwalker tribe took to dwelling here.

10. Weakened Floor (EL 1)

The section of the corridor marked on the map has been badly afflicted by age and tremors. Although the walls and ceiling remain sound, the floor has been weakened to the point of collapsing if more than 250 pounds are placed on it. The skinwalkers know of the hazard and take care to pass over the floor one at a time. The weakened floor can be noticed with a DC 20 Spot check by characters with the stonecunning ability. When

Skinwalker

the weakened floor section collapses, all characters standing on it plunge down 20 feet into area **31**, suffering 2d6 points of damage (Reflex DC 20 half).

11. Private Altar

This dusty room contains only a three-foot-tall ornate pedestal set against the north wall. Several objects are neatly arranged on the flat, marble surface of the pedestal, around a stone statuette of a hideous, two-headed monster.

This room was once used by the ancient Olman priest for private rites, but now serves the skinwalkers as a shrine to Khala.

Treasure: Sitting next to the statuette of Khala are five ivory rhythm sticks worth 10 gp each, three inlaid and bejeweled bowls worth 500 gp each, a crumbling bamboo flute and the remains of a feather fan. The statuette of Khala is cursed—whoever removes it from the tabernacle is afflicted by *bestow curse* unless he makes a DC 20 Will save. The cursed character loses 6 points of Wisdom as long as the curse lasts.

12. Burial Chamber (EL 14)

A dozen man-sized niches shrouded with thick cobwebs occupy the north wall of this chamber. Ten of the twelve contain mummified corpses propped up in a standing position. The shriveled bodies wear the rotting garb of ancient Olman warriors, their feathered, painted shields blasted by decay and obscured by centuries-old dust. Most of them are also draped with golden masks, earrings, bracelets, pectorals, and other gem-encrusted pieces of glittering treasure. The west and east wall are dominated by ten-foot-tall bas-relief carvings of Olman imperial warriors with ritual masks and feathered cloaks.

This room was a burial chamber for Olman princes who died before becoming emperors. The treasure interred with the bodies here is significant, but there is a reason the skinwalkers have left it untouched.

Creatures: As long as the treasure on the bodies here is left undisturbed, the spirits of the dead remain calm. As soon as anyone attempts to claim any of the treasure, though, these spirits rise up with bloodchilling howls in the form of eight wraiths led by a pair of dread wraiths. The wraiths pursue foes as long as they still carry any treasure stolen from here. The wraiths resemble large Olman warriors adorned with feathered cloaks. As they attack, the wraiths whisper horrible oaths in their ancient language.

Wraiths (8): 104 hp each; *Monster Manual* 258.

Dread Wraiths (2): 104 hp each; *Monster Manual* 258.

Treasure: The trappings on the mummified bodies of the crown-princes are very rich, and consist of an assortment of golden masks, earrings, bracelets, and pectorals encrusted with lapis lazuli and other semi-precious stones. As a whole, this treasure weighs 50 pounds and is worth 11,000 gp.

13. Vault of the Sun and Moon

The domed, seventy-foot-high ceiling of this chamber is supported by a ring of pillars carved in the likeness of tree trunks embraced by coiling feathered serpents. A cycle of bas-reliefs on the wall represents battles between Olman warriors and flightless dragons. The Olman warriors are led by a heroic archer who wields a bow that seems to be made of lightning. He is crowned emperor after his victory in a carving on the southern wall. A design of three rings of circles is engraved in the floor. Three seven-foot-tall stone statues on circular bases have been placed around the circle, one to the west, one to the east, and one to the south. All three statues represent similar-looking men dressed in imperious robes and wielding scepters. The western statue's scepter ends in a sun, the eastern's a moon, and the southern's a star. Engraved on the floor between these three figures are three rings of circular depressions. Three stone spheres sit in three of these depressions. A sphere bearing a carving of a moon sits in the inner ring at the westernmost depression, while a sphere bearing a star carving sits at the southernmost depression of the outer ring. The third ball bears a carving of the sun and sits in the easternmost depression of the middle ring.

A DC 30 Knowledge (history) check is enough to identify the heroic archer in the carvings as an ancient Olman hero named Macutotnal, who is said to have fought all maner of dragons and beasts with a bow given to him by the gods.

This room is, in fact, a complex vault built to house that weapon, the ancient and potent *Nimbus Bow*. The key to opening the vault is the stone disc Noltus recovered and left with Vesserin.

Engraved on the tiled floor of this shrine are three rings of sixteen circles. Each stone sphere radiates moderate conjuration magic, and if destroyed or brought from this room, the sphere (or its remnants) vanish and a new sphere appears in the appropriate starting position in the ring.

The layout of this room is not only symbolized on Noltus's stone disc, but the correct combination to open the vault is hidden in the carving. In order to open the vault, the stone balls must be placed in the proper depressions, one per ring. The correct combination is also indicated on the illustration.

If the PCs pick up on the thematic similarities between this room and Noltus's stone disc, feel free to give them a copy of the accompanying detailed image of Noltus's stone to aid them in puzzling out the proper combination. A character with ranks in Decipher Script, Knowledge (history), or bardic knowledge can gain a few additional clues, as determined by the result of his check.

DC 15: The bow at the center of the disc is likely the same one depicted on the walls of the room.

DC 20: The disc resembles a map of this chamber, with the eight circles corresponding to the pillars, the room's entrance at the bottom, and the three figures corresponding to the statues in the room.

DC 25: The three figures represent Quetzalcoatl (star), Tezcatlipoca (moon), and Tonatiuh (sun).

DC 30: The serpent coiling around the pillars also represents Quetzalcoatl, and

the direction indicates a rotation from the left to the right (clockwise).

DC 35: The star, sun, and moon symbols on the outer circle of the disc, being arrayed at the disc's edge, represent the most important part of the disc. There are 11 moons, 13 stars, and 12 suns

The correct solution to the puzzle is to move the moon sphere 11 positions clockwise, the star sphere 13 positions clockwise, and the sun sphere 12 positions clockwise. Doing so places the three spheres in the correct depressions, at which point blasts of wind blow through the chamber as the presence of the three ancient gods manifest as a spray of stars (Quetzalcoatl), a ray of sunlight (Tonatiuh) and a ray of moonlight (Tezcatlipoca) around each of the appropriate statues. Every creature in the room recieves a series of telepathic messages from these gods; as each message is delivered, the corresponding manifestation grows brighter.

Quetzalcoatl: "Our worshippers are few, and soon we will move on from this world. None of our children survive to free our ancient home from evil and rebuild our glorious civilization. Still, we can help you, strangers, in a fight that is both revenge for the past and hope for the future. Heed our words."

Tonatiuh: "In time of need, call the hawk to hunt your enemies."

Tezcatlipoca: "In time of need, call the wood to bend hostile weapons."

Quetzalcoatl: "In time of need, call the wind to down the wings of evil."

All: "Take the bow of Macutotnal, hero of the Olman people and first ruler of Thanaclan, and use it well in your battle against evil."

After the final message, the lights stream into the center of the room and condense into the shape of a bow. This is the *Nimbus Bow*, and it floats in the air until a creature grasps it. The ancient gods of Thanaclan have granted the PCs a boon, and they would do well to accept it.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: If the PCs earn the *Nimbus Bow*, grant them a CR 14 experience award.

14. Southern Square Chamber

This square chamber is bare of furniture, but its walls are almost entirely covered by friezes depicting processions of ancient Olman priests along pyramid-lined city streets. The floor is cluttered with hundreds of flat copper rings, each about two inches in diameter.

Each of the rings is carved with mystical Olman symbols used for divinations. A large stairway on the west wall leads down a level to the Chamber of the Great One (area **30**).

Treasure: There are 350 copper rings, but each is only worth 1 sp; in all, the collection is worth 35 gp.

15. Northern Square Chamber

The stone walls of this chamber are barren of carvings or decorations. A horrible stench of decay hangs heavy in the air, although a fresh breeze can be felt coming from the east.

The stench in this room comes from the horrific creature that dwells in area **19** to the north.

16. Trapped Corridor (EL 11)

The northern and southern walls of this corridor are decorated with abstract designs made with brown, red, and deep green ceramic tiles.

Trap: The area indicated on the map is trapped—when a Medium creature walks into the trapped area, his weight triggers this pressure plate, causing a fusillade of poisoned spears to launch from the walls.

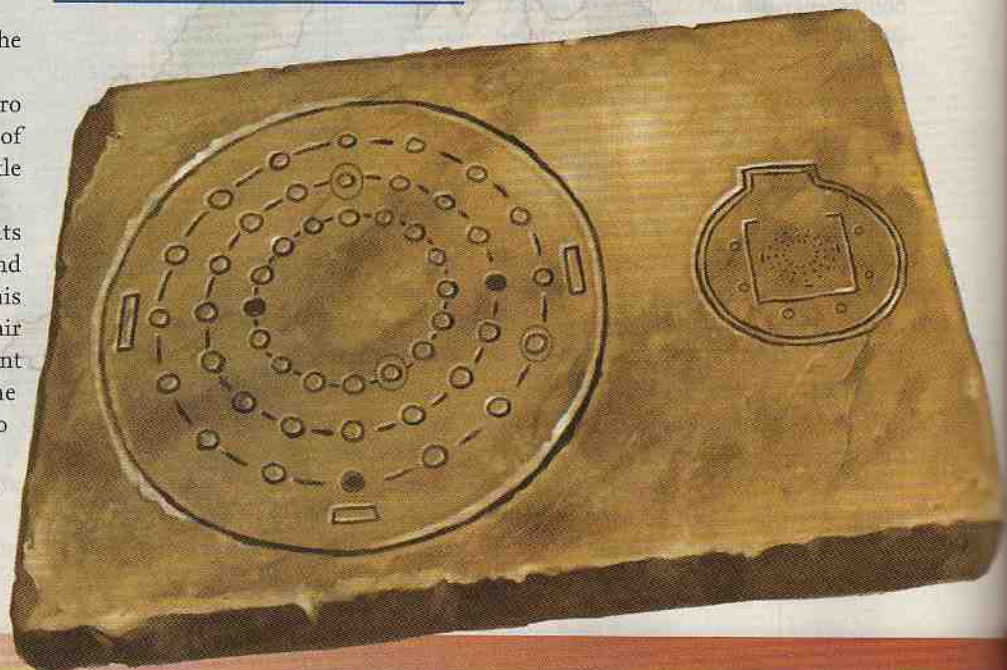
Fusillade of Poisoned Spears: CR 11; mechanical; proximity trigger; manual reset; Atk +21 ranged (1d8+4 plus poison, spear); poison (wyvern poison, DC 17 Fortitude save resists, 2d6 Con/2d6 Con); multiple targets (1d6 spears per target in hallway); Search DC 26; Disable Device DC 26.

17. Abandoned Entrance

A monumental entrance is set in the rocky wall between two rows of seven-foot-tall stone slabs. The slabs are carved in the likeness of ceremonial Olman guards. A pair of fifteen-foot-tall stone doors blocks the entrance. The figure of a ten-foot-tall Olman warrior with a feathered cloak and a ferocious grin is carved on both doors.

This stone door has been disabled to prevent its use. A DC 30 Disable Device check repairs the damage—otherwise the doors must be broken down in order to pass.

A DC 25 Survival check of the undergrowth directly north of the door reveals a faint trail. This trail leads north to area **21**, and was left by Throgiff (see area **24**) who, on the rare occasions he has to venture into the temple, uses this secret entrance.



Ancient Stone Door: 8 in. thick; Hardness 8; 120 hp; Break DC 34.

18. Vestition Chamber

A series of stone benches lines the walls of this chamber, which is otherwise bare of furniture. The remains of rotten and broken cabinets lie under the benches.

This room, once used to store religious vestments and to dress for ceremonies, is now unused.

19. The Horrid Pit (EL 14)

This chamber reeks horribly of blood and rotting flesh. Under a domed, fifty-foot-high ceiling, an enormous octagonal pit occupies most of the floor, leaving a five-foot-wide ledge around the rim.

Creature: The pit is the den of a terrifying ooze called a flesh jelly, a ravenous and immense mass of stinking fleshy tissue surrounded by a filthy membrane of skin, hair, and fur. As it moves, a few of the loose bones inside it press against the outer membrane, causing its disgusting body to bulge in places. The skinwalkers lured the monster into this pit years ago, and have taken pains to keep it fed so that it doesn't attempt to escape. The monster serves them well as a place to dispose of the bodies of sacrificial victims and animal carcasses. The flesh jelly is content with the offerings it receives, and stays in the pit unless someone provokes it. Note that the jelly's horrid stench affects any creature that comes within ten feet of the pit's edge.

The flesh jelly grows excited once it senses anything approaching. If, after 4 rounds, a Medium or larger creature is not thrown into the pit, the jelly grows agitated and attempts to climb out of the pit to reach any living creatures it can sense. It's a DC 20 Climb check to exit the pit. The flesh jelly's CR has been reduced to account for its unfavorable positioning.

FLESH JELLY **CR 14**

N Gargantuan ooze

Monster Manual II 104

Init –2; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft.; Listen –5, Spot –5

Aura horrid stench (50 ft., Fort DC 25)

AC 4, touch 4, flat-footed 4

hp 207 (18 HD)

Immune ooze traits

Fort +12, **Ref** +4, **Will** +1

Spd 20 ft.

Melee 4 slams +20 (2d8+11 plus disease)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Base Atk +13; **Grp** +36

Special Actions absorb, engulf

Abilities Str 32, Dex 6, Con 23, Int —, Wis 1, Cha 1

Skills Climb +11

Absorb (Ex) Any creature engulfed by a flesh jelly must make a DC 25 Fortitude save or be absorbed into its mass and die. Each absorbed creature heals a flesh jelly of 2d6 points of damage. A flesh jelly expels the absorbed creature's personal belongings from its body in 1d3 rounds. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Disease (Ex) A creature hit by a flesh jelly's slam attack or engulfed must make a DC 25 Fortitude save or contract filth fever. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Engulf (Ex) A flesh jelly can engulf creatures no larger than one size category smaller than itself as a standard action. It has merely to move over its opponents, affecting as many as it can cover. Opponents may make attacks of opportunity against the jelly, but if they do they are not entitled to a DC 30 Reflex save to avoid being engulfed. If this save is successful, the opponent is pushed back or aside (opponent's choice) as the jelly moves forward. Engulfed creatures are subject to the jelly's absorb special attack, and are considered to be grappled and trapped within its body. The save DC is Strength-based.

Horrid Stench (Ex) Any corporeal creature with 10 or fewer Hit Dice that comes within 50 feet of a flesh jelly must make a DC 25 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 2d6 rounds. Another save is required at the end of that time if the creature is still in range. A successful save makes a creature immune to the jelly's stench for 24 hours.

Nimbus Bow (Minor Artifact)

The *Nimbus Bow* was the preferred weapon of Macutotnal, an Olman hero who became an emperor after defeating a clan of flightless dragons known as linnorms. Macutotnal excelled in archery and falconry, and the gods of the sun, moon, and sky were so impressed with him that they each decided to award him a magical bow. When they realized they had all worked independently to create the weapons, Quetzalcoatl decreed that all three should become one.

The *Nimbus Bow* is a beautiful weapon, made of fine wood carved with spiraling motifs and encrusted with diminutive turquoises. The string sparkles and shimmers with electricity. It functions as a *+2 shocking burst longbow* that allows its wielder to add his Strength bonus to attacks made with it as if it were an appropriately modeled composite bow. Against reptilian monsters (including all dragons) and creatures with the Earth subtype, the bow is a *+4 shocking burst longbow* that inflicts an additional 1d6 points of damage on a hit..

As a standard action, the wielder of the *Nimbus Bow* can produce the following magical effects as long as he is outdoors.:

- *control winds* 1/day (by waving the bow overhead)
- *summon nature's ally V* 1/day (by firing an arrow into the air—the arrow transforms into a Medium arrowhawk as it is fired)
- *warp wood* 3/day (by aiming the bow at the object to be affected)

Strong transmutation and conjuration; CL 15th; Weight 2 lb.

20. Sacrifice Room

This chamber contains a single hunk of raw wood placed as a crude altar near the north wall. The altar and the floor near it are sticky with swaths of mostly dried blood. A trail of blood leads from the altar to the southwest corner of the room.

When the skinwalkers capture victims from raids against the lowlands, they are examined by the acolytes for their suitability for Khala. Those found suitible for their master (Charisma 15 or higher) are lead below and handed over to the kopru. Those who fail to pass this test are taken here to be sacrificed, a barbaric process involving the tearing of still-beating hearts from living chests before beheading. Heart and head are tossed down the stairs to the south (accounting for the bloodstains in that area), and the rest is given over to the flesh jelly in area **19**.

The bloodstains make the secret door easier to find—a DC 15 Search check uncovers it.

21. Secret Entrance

Although this is the primary land entrance for the skinwalkers, they take care to move without leaving much of a trail that would give it away. The secret entrance is built into one of the carved warrior slabs, and can be located with a DC 20 Search check.

22. Urn Room

A four-foot-tall clay pedestal fashioned in the shape of a miniature ziggurat stands in the middle of this otherwise bare room. A shallow indentation at the ziggurat's peak connects to narrow gutters that run down its four sides to a trough around the base. An inscription in ancient Olman ciphers runs around the uppermost tier of the ziggurat.

The Olman inscription on the urn reads, "May the blood keep safe the flesh." This ziggurat is actually a trap bypass lock that prevents the boulder trap (see area **23**) from activating. The ziggurat radiates faint transmutation magic. In order to lock the trap, a living creature must make a blood offering, allowing enough blood to drip into the shallow reservoir atop the ziggurat to run down the gutters and fill the trough at the base. This blood offering requires a fair amount of blood—the one giving the offering must donate enough so that he takes 1d6 points of damage and then bleeds long enough to take 1d6 points of Constitution damage.

A DC 25 Search check of the center section of the northern wall is enough to determine that the wall is hollow, although there doesn't appear to be any way to pass through the wall. If the Search check exceeds this DC 25 check by 10 or more, the character realizes that the wall can be lowered remotely. A DC 30 Disable Device can either prevent the wall from lowering or cause it to lower. Lowering the wall in this manner does not trigger the trap. The passageway beyond this wall slopes up to a point where a large round boulder awaits an opportunity to be unleashed.

23. Boulder Trap (EL 10)

This passageway slopes downward at a slight angle to the south. At the southern dead-end of the corridor, the wall is cracked and dented, as if an immense object had struck it.

Trap: At the point indicated, magical sensors in the floor, walls, and ceiling can detect the passage of any creature of Tiny or larger size. Unless the trap has been bypassed in area **21**, this sensor triggers the trap, causing the false wall and the ziggurat in area **21** to sink silently into the ground. One round later, an 8-foot-wide spherical boulder is released down the ramp north of area **21**. When the boulder is released, it rolls at a speed of 40 feet at initiative count 10 (covering a distance of 80 feet per round) down the hall to the south.

As the boulder rolls through any square containing a creature, that creature can make a DC 25 Reflex save if Small or smaller to press against a wall and avoid being hit. A Medium creature must make a DC 35 Reflex save, and a Large or larger creature gets no save at all. The boulder deals 14d6 points of damage to anything it strikes.

Boulder Trap: CR 10; mechanical; location trigger; repair reset; boulder overrun (14d6, crush, Reflex negates); multiple targets (all creatures in the boulder's path); onset delay 1 round; Search DC 35; Disable Device DC 30.

24. Prison Camp (EL 13)

A group of three ruined buildings with flat wooden roofs covered with palm leaves sits at the edge of a clearing here.

These buildings have been partially repaired by the skinwalkers, who use them now as a staging area for sacrifices. Whenever a raiding band returns, the prisoners are locked in the southern building, where they stay until a skinwalker acolyte can inspect them to determine who is fit for the true sacrifice to Khala.

Creatures: A small band of four skinwalkers lives in the northernmost building, guards whose sole duty is to watch over the prisoners kept in the southernmost building. At the time the PCs reach this area, there are no prisoners kept here. At any one time, one of these skinwalkers is patrolling the area; if he notices intruders here or at Tlaloc's Crown, he raises the alarm.

The central building belongs to a tiefling named Throgiff, a sort of ambassador from the Crimson Fleet. Throgiff is an unexceptional-looking tiefling with small, stumpy horns, sun-baked skin, and a lean physique, who volunteered several months ago for this duty when given the choice between it and execution for insubordination. Initially annoyed at the post, Throgiff has since grown quite dissatisfied with his lot in life—it won't take much to woo him away from his loyalties to the Crimson Fleet.

Throgiff is, in theory, here to represent the interests of the Crimson Fleet to the skinwalkers, the koprus, and Khala, while at the same point making sure that these allies continue to be allies and that the production of *shadow pearls* doesn't waver. In many ways, it's a needless post since Khala has no intention of ceasing production of the pearls until enough have been made, yet neither Throgiff nor the Crimson Fleet know this. They view the Lords of Dread as a necessary element in the preparation for the savage tide, and mistakenly think of themselves as Demogorgon's favored when, in fact, they are merely the distributors for his plot.

If the alarm is raised by the skinwalkers, Throgiff initially puts on a good show of being a helpful ally, and joins in the defense of the area.

THROGIFF **CR 12**

Male tiefling rogue 12
CE Medium outsider (native)
Monster Manual 209
Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +16, Spot +16
Languages Abyssal, Common

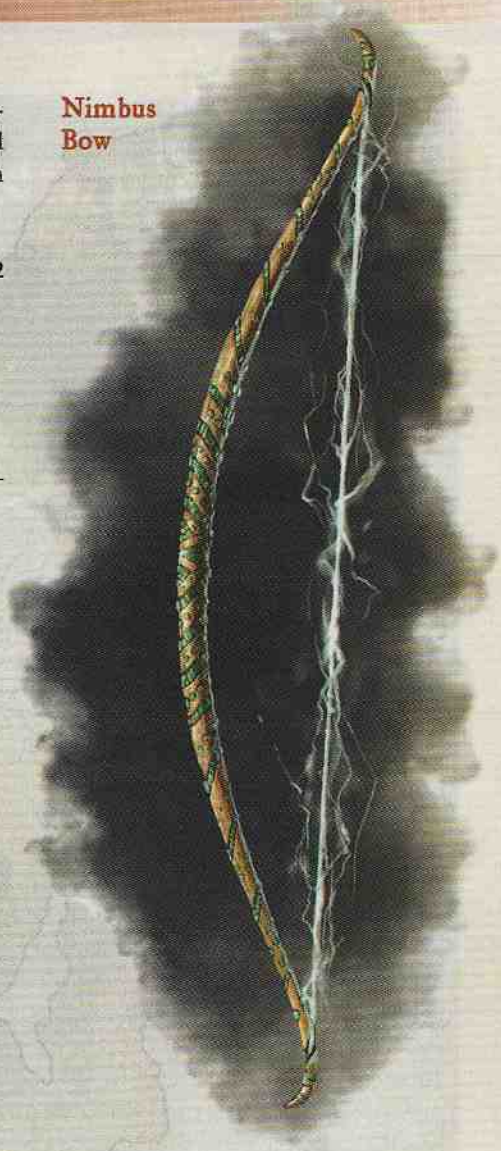
AC 21, touch 16, flat-footed 16; improved uncanny dodge
hp 68 (12 HD)
Resist acid 5, cold 5, electricity 5, fire 5
Fort +6, **Ref** +13, **Will** +5; improved evasion

Spd 30 ft.
Melee mwk shortsword +11/+6 (1d6+1/19–20)
Ranged +2 *composite shortbow* +16/+11 (1d6+3/×3) or
Rapid Shot +2 *composite shortbow* +14/+14/+9 (1d6+3/×3)
Base Atk +9; **Grp** +10
Atk Options Rapid Shot, Shot on the Run, sneak attack +6d6
Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds* (2), *potion of fly*, *potion of gaseous form*, scroll of *dimension door*, scroll of *sending*, *wand of cat's grace* (44 charges)
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th)
1/day—*darkness*

Abilities Str 13, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10
SQ trapfinding, trap sense +3
Feats Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Shot on the Run, Skill Focus (Use Magic Device)
Skills Balance +22, Bluff +17, Hide +22, Listen +16, Move Silently +20, Spot +16, Tumble +20, Use Magic Device +18
Possessions combat gear, +2 *studded leather armor*, masterwork short sword, +2 *composite shortbow* (+1 Str) with 10 +1 *anarchic arrows*, 10 cold iron arrows, and 20 standard arrows, *ring of protection +1*

Skinwalkers (4): hp 76 each; see Appendix.

Tactics: The skinwalkers initiate combat with arrows, switching to melee attacks only as the PCs close with them. Throgiff spends the first few rounds of combat drinking his *potion of fly* and using his *wand of cat's grace* before flying into the air to provide air support with his bow. He attempts to flee if all the skinwalkers are slain or if he's reduced to less than 20 hit points, using his scroll of *dimension door* or *potion of gaseous form* if possible.



Nimbus Bow

Treasure: Although Throgiff carries most of his valuables on his person, one thing of value remains in his hut—a ledger. Although the moisture and environment have damaged it slightly, the book remains legible (although written in Abyssal), and contains an accounting of the number of victims who have been sacrificed since Throgriff's arrival here a year ago (160 sacrifices have been made to date, with 23 indicated as "special" sacrifices). The ledger also tracks how many *shadow pearls* have been "sent below" for completion (since Throgriff's arrival, he's seen 44 pearls sent below). He's placed

checkmarks next to several of these shipments, indicating that all but nine of these have arrived at Scuttlecove.

Development: If Throgiff escapes, he decides to abandon the Crimson Fleet. He knows about Farshore, and makes his way south, intending to stow away on a ship bound for civilization.

If the PCs capture Throgiff alive, his initial attitude is unfriendly. If made friendly, he's willing to tell the PCs everything he knows about the Crimson Fleet and their plans for the *shadow pearls*, as detailed at the start of the next adventure.

25. Tlaloc's Crown

This pyramid rises majesticly from the surrounding undergrowth to a height of seventy feet. The sides are decorated with countless carvings of a bulging-eyed reptilian head adorned with a feathered headdress.

A DC 25 Knowledge (religion) check identifies the reptilian heads as Tlaloc, the Olman god of rain. Once a sacred temple to this god, it was here that the ancient Olmans of Thanaclan created *Tlaloc's Tear* and launched their final attack on Golismoraga (see "The Lightless Depths" in DUNGEON #144). At the peak of this pyramid, a massive circular stone disk, its eight-foot-diameter face caked with blood, covers a six-foot-wide shaft that bores down through the ziggurat's heart and into the earth below. This shaft eventually leads to a point above Holashner's Ziggurat in the ruined aboleth city. If the PCs took this route to the central plateau, they'll need to destroy or otherwise move the stone disk to escape. The block of stone weighs 15,000 pounds—likly too heavy for most PCs to lift, but not heavy enough to prevent a dozen skinwalkers from dragging the disk aside when fresh *shadow pearls* are ready to be delivered to the kopru of Golismorga.

Stone Disk: 2 ft. thick; Hardness 8; 360 hp; Break DC 48.

Development: This adventure assumes that the PCs have already disrupted the *shadow pearl* operation in Golismorga. If they haven't, and if they decide to ambush a delivery here, they'll face an army of nearly 100 skinwalkers, a dozen skinwalker acolytes, and Chief Achcauhtli, all of whom take part in the 2-hour-long ritual involving the delivery of *shadow pearls* to the kopru. The actual delivery is handled by flying skinwalker acolytes.

26. Landing

Life-sized clay statues of ancient Olman warriors armed with spears stand at the four corners of this landing. The warriors wear high helmets and feathered shields. The tips of the spears, the feathers, and other details of the statues have crumbled to dust and fallen off.

The warrior statues are harmless and brittle due to their antiquity. A stench of rotten fish issues from the west stairway.

27. Harvesting Supplies

Sitting near the walls of this square room are eighteen three-foot-tall urns. Leaning on the south wall are two long-handled fishing nets, harpoons, and prying bars.

The urns contain food and supplies for nurturing the giant oysters in area **28**. The majority of these supplies are mundane, but a few of them contain particularly foul smelling fluid, shuddering red mud, or twitching headless insects with too many legs. A DC 25 Knowledge (the planes) check identifies these strange contents as Abyssal in nature. They smell and taste horrible.

The other tools are used to gather pearls from giant oysters.

28. Giant Oyster Pond

The floor of this cave is hidden by shallow water. Hundreds of oysters of various sizes cling to the rock formations near the cave walls. Six of these oysters have grown enormous, nearly five feet across with black and red striped shells covered with curved hooks and twisted horns.

This cave is flooded to a depth of 2 feet. There are hundreds of freshwater oysters growing here, and although the smaller pearls are periodically harvested by the koprus, the six larger oysters have grown enormous on foul substances harvested from the Abyss. Prying one of these immense oysters open requires a DC 26 Strength check—using the tools from area **27** grants a +6 circumstance bonus to this check. Unfortunately, any attempt to pry open one of these oysters results in a bloodcurdling shrieking from the oyster, a sound that alerts the koprus in area **29**, who immediately come to investigate.

Giant Fiendish Oyster: Hardness 12; hp 120; Break DC 34.

Treasure: Each of the large oysters contains a partially formed black pearl the size of a grapefruit. These are the raw materials used to create *shadow pearls*, and while they are not yet magical, each of these pearls is worth 1,000 gp.

29. Oyster Guardian Cave (EL 15)

The limestone formations in this flooded cave have been shaped into bizarre furniture, including a semi-submerged table. On the table are dozens of elongated flasks and vials filled with transparent, colored liquids.

This room is flooded to a depth of 4 feet. On the table sit several alchemical containers that contain various chemicals used to stimulate pearl growth in oysters. A crystal box on the table contains pulverized gems. An underwater entrance in the northwest part of this cave can be spotted from above the water level with a DC 20 Spot check; this passageway leads down to area **43**.

Creatures: The koprus of Taboo Temple are immense monsters, eel-like creatures with tentacled faces, tails that split into three hooked flukes, and bulging, fishlike eyes. The PCs have likely fought similar koprus in Golismorga, although the ones encountered here are tougher specimens. Fanatical servitors of Khala the Two-Headed, they are among the oldest and biggest specimens of their race. Besides having the maximum possible advancement for their race, their long exposure to Khala, the hideous chemicals he uses to craft *shadow pearls*, and the foul concoctions used to nurture the oysters in area **28** have made them fiendish creatures as well.

Three Taboo Temple koprus dwell in this chamber. Tasked with guarding the oysters in area **28**, they fight intruders to the death.

Taboo Temple Kopru (3) **CR 11**
Advanced elite fiendish kopru
CE Large monstrous humanoid
Monster Manual II 134
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Aquan, Olman

AC 22, touch 11, flat-footed 20
hp 102 (12 HD); **DR** 10/magic
Resist cold 10, fire 10; **SR** 17
Fort +8, **Ref** +10, **Will** +10

Spd 5 ft., swim 40 ft.
Melee* tail slap +15 (1d8+14) and 2 claws +13 (1d6+9) and bite +13 (1d6+9)
Base Atk +12; **Grp** +32
Atk Options constrict 3d8+13, improved grab (tail slap), smite good 1/day (+12 damage)
Special Actions dominate person
Combat Gear *potion of fly* (3)
*5-point Power Attack

Abilities Str 28, Dex 15, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 12
SQ amphibious
Feats Ability Focus (dominate person), Improved Bull Rush, Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack
Skills Escape Artist +17, Move Silently +17, Swim +17
Possessions combat gear, *+3 studded leather armor*, coral holy symbol of Demogorgon worth 50 gp

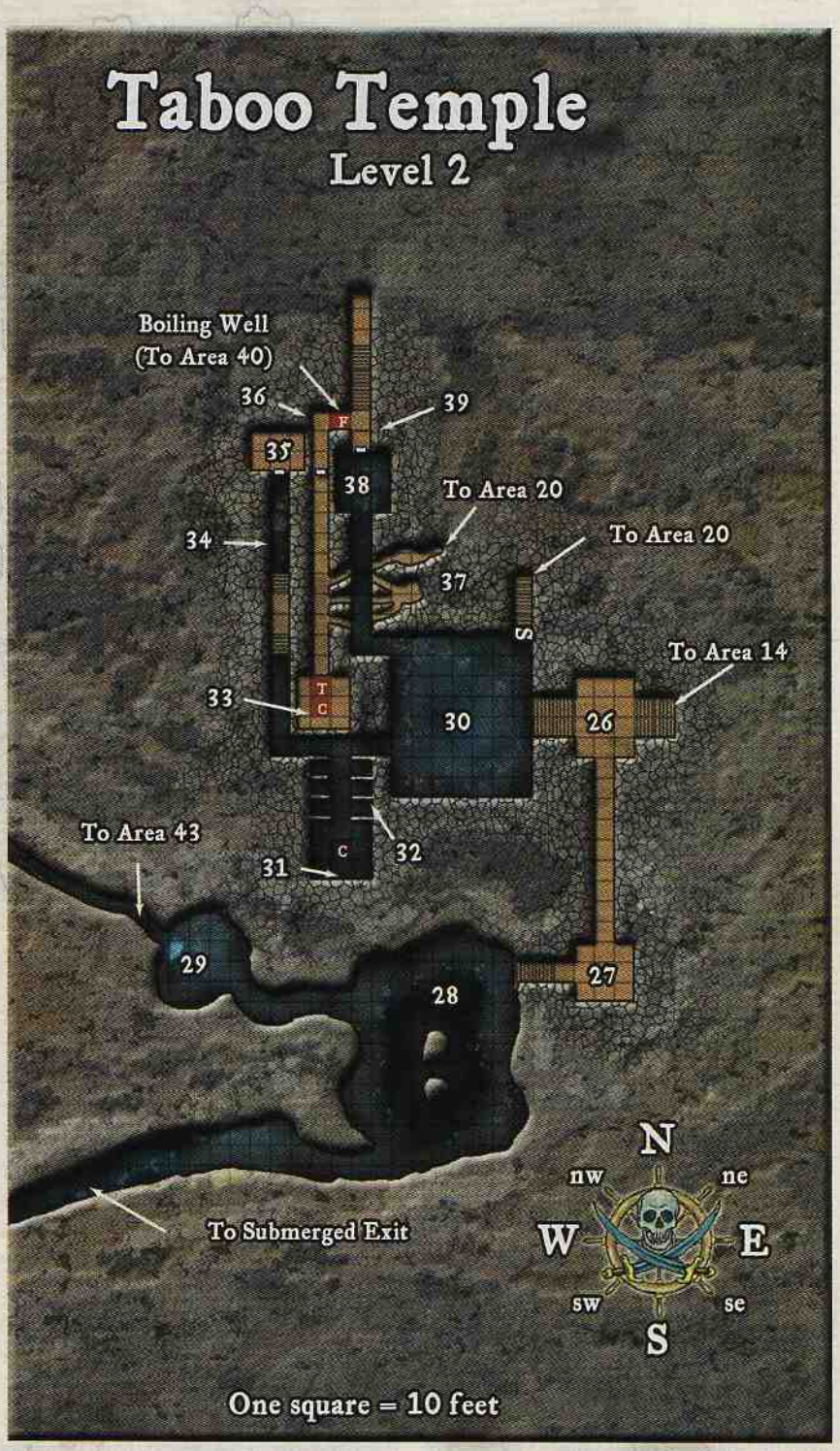
Dominate Person (Su) A kopru can attempt to *dominate person* once per day, as the spell (CL 10th), save that the range is 180 feet and the duration is eight days. A DC 17 Will save resists the domination. The save DC is Charisma-based.
Improved Grab (Ex) If a kopru hits a target its own size or smaller with a tail slap, it can attempt to start a grapple as a free action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity. If it establishes a hold, it can constrict. A kopru has a +7 racial bonus on grapple checks.

30. Chamber of the Great One (EL 14)

The bas-relief figure of a feathered serpent is carved as a single frieze that runs on the walls of this chamber near the ceiling. The chamber is flooded with murky, rancid-smelling water.

This chamber is flooded to a depth of 8 feet, its floor being 4 feet lower than those in nearby flooded areas. Characters entering this room can make a DC 20 Spot check to notice the drop-off, otherwise the character falls prone into the water upon stepping into the room. This chamber was once a place to worship Quetzalcoatl, but now it has become the den of three demons in Khala's service.

The secret door to the north can be discovered with a DC 25 Search check. The stairway beyond leads up to area **20**.



Creatures: The three hezrous who dwell here regard the koprus as temporary allies at best. They view their part in the sacrifice rituals with great pride, and never fail to promptly deliver any heads and hearts tossed down the stairs from area **20** above to Khala. They hide in the murky water and emerge suddenly to attack advancing PCs, fighting to the death.

Hezrous (3): hp 138 each; *Monster Manual* 44.

31. Old Torture Chamber

This partially flooded chamber seems to be an ancient interrogation chamber, complete with bronze chains and shackles and a stone table with a gutter. The fifteen-foot-high ceiling is badly cracked and glistens with moisture.

The water here is 4 feet deep. Several small, harmless cave fish dwell in the waters of this room, occasionally bumping against PCs' legs.

The ceiling here is particularly rotted and weak; characters who fall through from area **10** above land in the section indicated on the map.

32. Cells

This partially flooded area contains six cells, three per side and closed by bronze gates.

The water here is 4 feet deep. The bronze gates are stuck, although very little force is required to unhinge or open them after centuries of erosion. The cells are empty and haven't been used in ages.

33. Statuary Room (EL 14)

This room is tiled with blue ceramic of various hues. Small puddles of water dot the floor, and the walls are lined with ancient Olman statuary, lithe human figures and fiendish beasts with snakelike bodies and multiple arms. The statues are badly deteriorated, in some cases scarcely recognizable beyond a vague body shape. There are twelve statues in all, each standing nearly ten feet in height. A stone trapdoor is set in the middle of the ceiling, although any means of reaching it has long since rotted away.

The trapdoor above leads to area **8**. The contents of this chamber once commemorated the greatest leaders of Thanaclan, but time and erosion have not been kind to their countenances.

The section of floor just inside the northern entrance of the room is in fact a trigger; as soon as a Small or larger creature steps on it, a bronze portcullis drops down to seal the northern entrance to the room. A pressure plate next to the north archway causes a portcullis to fall and block the passage.

Bronze Portcullis: 2 in. thick; Hardness 10; 60 hp; Lift DC 25; Break DC 28.

Creatures: Four of the poorly-formed statues lurch to life as soon as the portcullis drops. The golems do not pursue foes from this room.

Clay Golems (4): hp 90 each; *Monster Manual* 134.

34. Slime Pool (EL 6)

This section of the corridor is separated from the rest of the passage by a raised area covered with pale fungus.

The water to the south of the platform is 4 feet deep, while to the north it's only 2 feet deep. While the pale fungus that grows on the platform is harmless, the green slime that grows on the submerged floor between area **35** and the platform is not. Any character wading through the water is automatically exposed to the slime—a character with at least 5 ranks in Knowledge (dungeoneering) can make a DC 20 Spot check to notice and realize the peril before entering the danger zone. Green slime is detailed on page 76 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

35. Ancient Archive

A stone desk carved in the likeness of an ancient Olman head with a flattened top sits against the northern wall of the room. The walls are fitted with stone shelving, with many stacks of clay tablets piled on it.

The door to this chamber is tenaciously stuck, and requires a DC 30 Strength check to force open. Doing so allows the water to spill into the room; any character in the water must make a DC 15 Strength check to resist being knocked prone (and possibly into more green slime).

Treasure: This chamber was an important archive to Thanaclan. The information contained in the dozens of tablets here isn't particularly helpful to the PCs, but could be of great value to scholars. The archive weighs 500 pounds in all, and if transported to civilization is worth 2,000 gp.

The head-shaped desk hides a secret compartment in the left eye that can be discovered with a DC 25 Search check. Within is a +2 *human bane dagger*, 500 gp, and two coral statuettes of fish with ruby eyes worth 1,500 gp each.

36. Boiling Well

A five-foot-wide circular well opens in the floor here. Waves of heat, hot vapor, and a loud bubbling sound emanate from within.

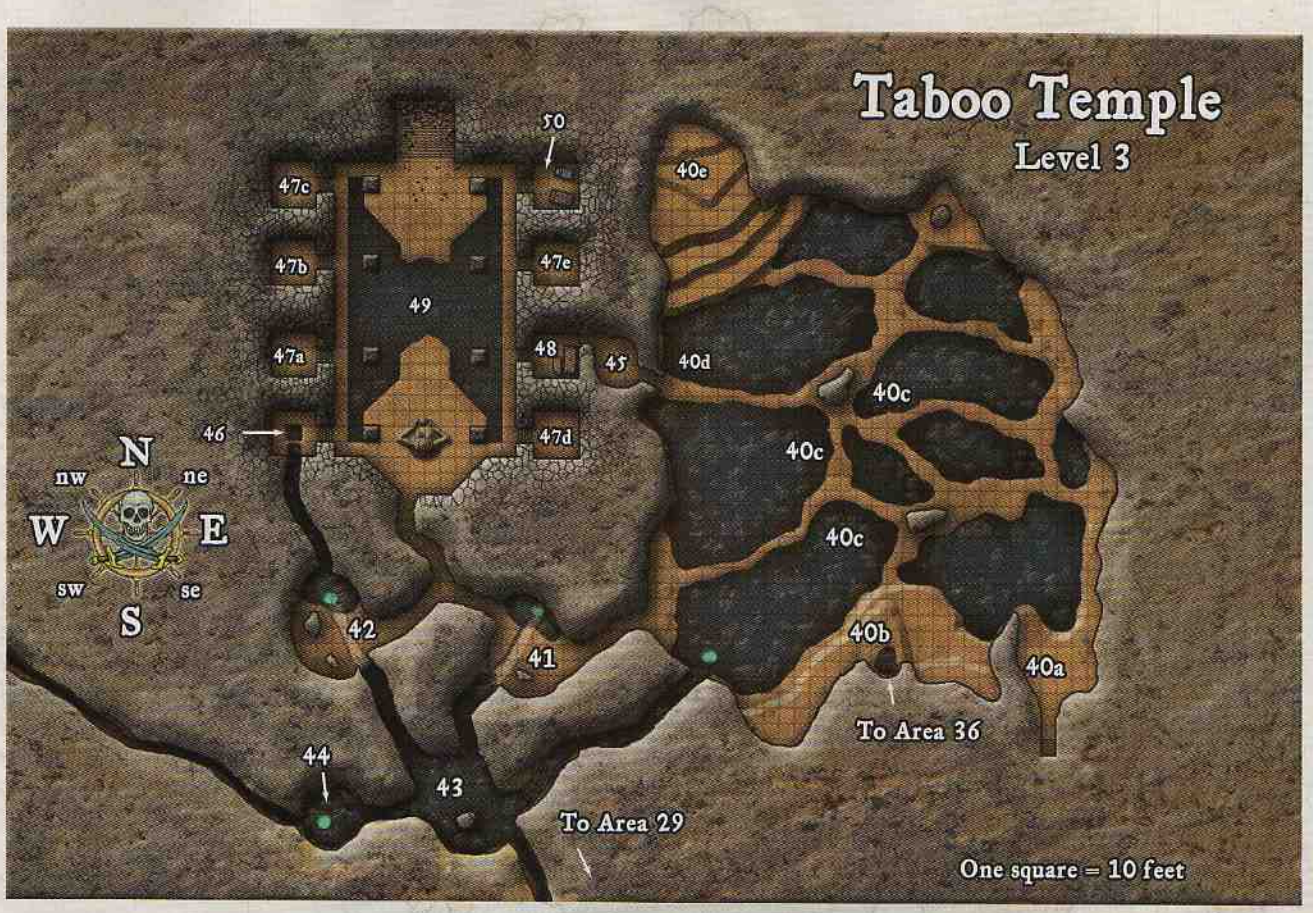
The narrow ledge around the well is quite slippery; moving along it requires a DC 12 Balance check. This well shaft drops 65 feet to a pool of boiling water. Beyond this point, the shaft curves upward to the northwest in a U shape that emerges at area **40B**, covering a distance of 80 feet. Swimming through the boiling water requries a DC 20 Swim check, and immersion inflicts 10d6 points of fire damage per round.

37. Enormous Ooze (EL 10)

Several two-foot-wide tunnels open along the walls of this flooded corridor, some just over water level, and others near the ten-foot-high ceiling. A powerful bitter stench of emanates from the tunnels.

The water in the corridor is 4 feet deep.

Creatures: The 2-foot-wide tunnels in the walls were originally created by a colony of rats, but they have long since been eaten by the immense ochre jelly that has moved into these tunnels. The



creature surges out, a horizontal geyser of thick yellowish slime, as soon as anything passes by these holes. Note that although the jelly is Huge, its amorphous nature allows it to squeeze into these tunnels and fight while spread out along the wall and ceiling of the main hallway without penalty.

Huge Ochre Jelly **CR 10**
N Huge ooze
Monster Manual 202
Init –5; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft.; Listen –5, Spot –5

AC 3, touch 3, flat-footed 3
hp 261 (18 HD)
Immune ooze traits
Fort +15, **Ref** +1, **Will** +1

Spd 10 ft., climb 10 ft.
Melee slam +18 (2d6+10 plus 1d6 acid)
Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Base Atk +13; **Grp** +27
Atk Options acid, constrict 2d6+10 plus 1d6 acid, improved grab

Abilities Str 24, Dex 1, Con 28, Int —, Wis 1, Cha 1
SQ split

38. Chamber of the Mosaics

The walls of this chamber are decorated with mosaics representing various fantastic and horrid creatures from the ocean depths.

The water in this room is 4 feet deep. A deadly trap once protected this room, but the oil sprayer and firestarter were triggered several years ago and never reset. The water presents an altogether new hazard, though.

The northern door is stuck shut, requiring a DC 30 Strength check to open. It can also be battered down. Once open, all of the water in the flooded sections of this level (areas **30–32** and this room) immediately flows north and down the stairs. The flow carries along any creature in area **38** that fails a DC 15 Strength check to resist the current; swimming creatures can instead make a DC 15 Swim check to avoid being swept down the stairs. A creature swept down the stairs takes 2d6 damage, and must make a DC 15 Reflex save upon reaching area **40A** to avoid being swept into the nearest pool of hot mud.

39. Stairs

This flight of stairs leads to area **40A**.

40. Volcanic Grotto (EL 14)

The air in this enormous volcanic grotto is steamy and foul with noxious vapor. The floor is a field of bubbling mud pots, geysers, hot springs and mineral crusts. Rich reds, browns, and yellows, combined with blacks and grays, vie for dominance in the churning, bubbling morass. Terraces crusted with deposits from mineral springs extend from the sides of the cavern at several points, and here and there form stable-looking walkways and bridges over the sputtering mud. Stalactites hang from the ceiling, merging with stalagmites in two places near the center of the grotto to form pillars.

The geysers and boiling mud in this room have left the place at a sweltering temperature. This severe heat forces characters to make a Fortitude save once every 10 minutes (DC 15, +1 per previous check) to avoid taking 1d4 points of nonlethal damage—further rules for

severe heat can be found on page 303 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The bubbling mud in the pools is 2 feet deep within 10 feet of a mineral walkway, but drops away to 10 feet deep near the center.

Furthermore, as the PCs move about the grotto, there is a 20% chance per round that a mudpot busts, a geyser sprays, or a vent of steam blasts one character (selected randomly). That character takes 1d10 points of fire damage, with a DC 15 Reflex save reducing the damage by half.

Characters who move along the twisting walkways find them quite slippery, necessitating a DC 10 Balance check to move at all. Failure by 5 or more indicates the character falls prone, in which case that character has a 50% chance of sliding into a nearby mud pit. The bubbling mud isn't nearly as hot as boiling water, but is still hot enough that immersion in the mud inflicts 1d10 points of fire damage per round. The mud restricts movement—it costs 3 squares of movement to move through the stuff (or 2 squares, if a creature uses a swim speed).

At location **40B** is a spring of boiling water that connects to the bottom of the shaft in area **36**.

Creatures: The koprus of Taboo Temple find this chamber to be a relaxing place to rest, and at the time the PCs reach the room three are doing just that at the locations marked **40C**. The three koprus have enough fire resistance that total immersion in the mud cannot hurt them, and they often rest with just the top half of their heads above the mudline. In this position, they gain +10 circumstance bonuses on their Hide checks.

Taboo Temple Koprus (3): hp 102 each; see page 77.

Tactics: When the koprus notice the PCs (likely hearing them well before they spot them due to the steam in the air), two move into position so that they can try to grab PCs off the walkways with their tails, hoping to constrict them while holding them in the bubbling mud. The third swims as quietly as it can to the watery exit in the southwest corner of the room, hoping to alert the other koprus in area **43**. If successful, those koprus return to this chamber in 2d4 rounds to join the battle (or ambush anyone remaining in this room).

Trap: At location **40D**, the mineral terrace has grown weak. The weight of any Small or larger creature causes the crust to break open into a pool of boiling water.

Collapsing Path: CR 12; mechanical, location trigger; no reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids; boiling water (10d6 fire damage per round of immersion, 30 feet deep); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 35.

Treasure: A tin coffer is hidden near the brink of the terrace near area **40B** under a layer of dust and mineral deposits—it can be discovered with a DC 25 Search check. Inside the coffer are three emeralds worth 1,000 gp each.

At area **40E** sits an ancient Olman throne. Transported here in the distant past at the bequest of an eccentric Olman priest, the same Olman's mineral-encrusted skeleton still sits on the throne, bone and stone fossilized together. Sitting across the skeleton's lap, equally encrusted by minerals, is a large bastard sword. The sword within remains intact, as it is in fact a *sun blade*. The weapon's aura of good repels the koprus, and as such they have not discovered the magic ring on one of the skeleton's digits. This emerald ring is in fact a *ring of telekinesis*—it can be discovered with a DC 20 Search check.

41. Eastern Kopru Cave

The northern part of this cave features a pool of warm, steaming water.

The koprus use the submerged passage at the bottom of the pool to move to and from area **43** without having to crawl out of the water. They can use the submerged tunnels that connect these caves to escape and harry PCs.

42. Western Kopru Cave

The roughly hewn walls of this cave are almost completely covered with spiraling carvings, which create a crude and disturbing depiction of an amorphous, demonic monster of colossal proportions over a pool at the north.

This cave is similar to area **41**, although the koprus have taken the time to decorate the walls here. The submerged passage here also leads to a vertical pit in area **46**. One kopru from area **43** takes a few rounds to slither over here to warn Khala of any intrusions on this level before joining his kin in battle.

43. Kopru Main Cave (EL 14)

This completely submerged cave is full of bizarre furniture carved from volcanic rock, limestone, and coral. It is obviously a living area for aquatic creatures, with algae beddings and fluorescent fungus lamps.

Creatures: A total of nine fiendish koprus dwell in Taboo Temple. Three are encountered in area **29**, while another three are in area **40**. The remaining three can be encountered here. Of course, exactly how many koprus are encountered here depends on how many escaped from those other areas to seek backup.

Taboo Temple Koprus (3): hp 102 each; see page 77.

Treasure: The koprus keep a sizable treasure here, including 700 pp in a two-foot-tall blue ceramic vase encrusted with turquoises worth 3,500 gp, a collection of a dozen statuettes of aquatic monsters and creatures worth 5,000 gp as a set, 13 large red coral platters shaped like clam shells worth 300 gp each, and a mother-of-pearl box worth 200 gp that contains 13 black peals worth 500 gp each and 27 jaspers worth 50 gp each. Hanging from a fishing net draped on one of the cave walls is a collection of exotic fishing hooks (25 pieces of ivory worth 10 gp each) and a *trident of fish command*. A sealed and waterproof crystal flask near the bottom of the cave contains four *potions of cure moderate wounds*.

44. Route Below

A bed of algae dotted with violet and orange fresh-water anemones writhe along the walls of this room.

A passage at the bottom of the cave leads deeper under the Isle of Dread;

characters who explore this passageway eventually reach one of several kopru fortresses scattered throughout the Isle of Dread's Underdark.

45. Skull Depository

The rough walls of this circular cave are marked by large cracks and covered by patches of fluorescent fungus, whose greenish light dimly illuminate a carpet of human skulls on the floor.

This chamber is where the koprus store the skulls of victims sacrificed to Khala—all that remains after he uses their severed heads and hearts to craft *shadow pearls*.

46. Pit Room

A ten-foot-wide square pit opens in the middle of this room. Twenty feet down, water fills the pit. The remains of shattered clay urns are piled in the room corners.

The pit is connected to area **42** via a submerged tunnel.

47. Shrine Offerings Rooms

This square room is lined with three-foot-tall clay urns. Most urns are open, broken, and toppled to the floor.

These areas were once used to store food and offerings to the gods. Now they are empty, dusty, and unused.

48. Alchemical Laboratory

This square room has been furnished with two large wooden tables and a smaller, lower stone table. Alchemical alembics and tools clutter the tops of the two large tables, while an ancient Olman urn has been lifted on the small one in the southwest corner. Another urn sits beside one of the large tables near the north wall. Three rows of stone shelves have been carved in the middle of the south wall. On the shelves are dozens of clay vases and glass vials of various sizes and shapes.

This alchemical laboratory is used by Khala to prepare the necessary alchemical components to create *shadow pearls*. The urn on the stone table has been fitted with a bronze tap at the bottom and a bronze funnel near the top. The urn is almost empty, and contains just half a gallon of a foul-smelling mixture composed of human blood, an alchemical liquefier, and Khala's gastric juices. Khala uses this urn to dissolve the hearts, flesh, and brains from his sacrifice victims. In the ritual that creates the *shadow pearls*, the tormented spirits of the victims are bound to generate chaotic and insane thoughts in those affected by a *shadow pearl's* savage tide. The urn sitting on the floor contains tar. Most of the containers on the shelves also contain unfinished substances that only Khala knows how to use, thanks to his exceptional alchemical ability. Any PC making a DC 25 Craft (alchemy) check understands that the laboratory is dedicated to the creation of some kind of "mind-affecting explosive" (the one that unleashes the madness of a savage tide). Given several days, an alchemist could determine the exact properties of a *shadow pearl* by studying these tools, although the process of creating them requires a spiritual connection to Demogorgon shared only by his various aspects.

Treasure: On the two large tables is the equivalent of a masterwork alchemist's lab.

49. Shrine of the Shadow Pearls (EL 17)

The forty-foot-high ceiling arches of this enormous shrine are supported by eight massive square pillars, which also separate the central part of the hall from two balconies. Four passages open on each of the balconies, which run fifteen feet above floor level on the long sides of the hall, and can be accessed by flights of stairs at the north and south ends. The main entrance to the hall, a monumental arch at the base of a great stairway up on the north wall, is completely obstructed by rubble. The patron deity of the shrine is represented by a twenty-foot-tall statue which stands by the south wall near a smaller entrance. The statue has been damaged by age and moisture, and a large crack has split its face. The statue stands before a platform that extends over a pool full of foul water and floating algae. On the platform is a four-foot-tall dais of black stone, with a melon-sized black pearl on the top. As the pearl appears to throb with eldritch power, waves of magical ectoplasm seem to reach from the pool to envelop the dais.

This shrine, once dedicated to Quetzalcoatl, is where Khala has spent the last several years creating *shadow pearls*. Once a pearl reaches a suitable size in area **29**, Khala kills its giant oyster and places the pearl on the dais here. He then uses his alchemical skills to prepare a mixture of human blood and special ingredients. Each pearl requires the death of six living sacrifices, five to provide heads and hearts and one live sacrifice of a creature with a Charisma score of at least 15. The living sacrifices are performed by Khala, who consumes their bodies and then regurgitates the slurry over the pearl. The skulls of the other victims are stripped of flesh and mixed with liquefied heart tissue in an urn in area **48**, creating a special elixir used to continually anoint the *shadow pearl* during a four-week-long cycle of meditations and prayers. At this point, the *shadow pearl* is capable of creating a savage tide with a radius of 120 feet; in order to enhance this radius to a mile, it must be delivered down to Golismorga, where it is allowed to steep in the black bile of the world for several more weeks until the dangerous device is finally ready.

The dais and the pool emanate strong conjuration and transmutation magic, as well as overwhelming chaos and evil.

Creatures: Khala the Two-Headed, an aspect of Demogorgon, is a horrible hybrid between demon and kopru. Khala appears as a vaguely humanoid beast, with broad shoulders and saurian legs. His flesh is mottled black and dark green, with a light green and yellow belly. Froglike skin with patches of bristly black hair adorn his shoulders and hips. His arms are boneless and tentacular, but end in three-fingered hands with large black talons. His tail is long and powerful, splitting into three flukes like that of a kopru. Although Khala has two heads, his two fanged faces run together in one oversized and horrific maw, although in the middle between the two sets of fanged jaws his gullet is gaping

Affiliation Awards

If your PCs belong to any of the affiliations detailed in DRAGON #348's "Savage Tidings," goals exist in "City of Broken Idols" that can increase their affiliation score. Each of the following criterions grants an affiliation score modifier of +1.

Church of the Whirling Fury: Slay Onailati, Chief Achcauhtli, Xerkamat, the hezrous, all six skulvyns, and Khala.

The Dawn Council: Discover the fate of Noltus Innersol and report to the Dawnhouse of Pelor in Sasserine.

The Scarlet Brotherhood: Recruit Throgiff into the Brotherhood—his knowledge of the Crimson Fleet is invaluable.

The Seekers: Recover the archives from area **35** and donate them to a Seeker Chapterhouse.

The Witchwardens: Donate the contents of the alchemical lab in area **48** to the appropriate authorities.

Zelkarune's Horns: Capture the deinosuchus alive and transport it to Sasserine as a monster for an arena fight.

and toothless. It is from this central gullet that a long, tentacle-like, triply-forked tongue writhes.

Khala is not alone. He has six "pets" with him in the waters of this room—crocodilian demons known as skulvyns.

KHALA **CR 16**

Male aspect of Demogorgon

CE Large outsider (aquatic, chaotic, evil, native, tanar'ri)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision, see invisibility; Listen +27, Spot +27

Aura gaze (30 feet, Will DC 27)

Languages Abyssal, Aquan, Common, Olman; telepathy 300 ft.

AC 33, touch 16, flat-footed 26 (–1 size, +7 Dex, +17 natural); Dodge, Mobility

hp 250 (20 HD); fast healing 5; **DR** 15/cold iron and good

Immune charm, confusion, electricity, flanking, poison

Resist acid 10, cold 10, fire 10; **SR** 28

Fort +20, **Ref** +19, **Will** +20

Spd 50 ft., swim 50 ft.

Melee* 2 tentacles +25 (1d6+16 plus rot) and 2 bites +23 (1d10+10) and tail slap +23 (2d6+10)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +20; **Grp** +35

Atk Options Combat Expertise, Spring Attack, Whirlwind Attack, constrict 2d6+16, improved grab

Special Actions demonic spittle (+26 ranged touch), *summon tanar'ri*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th)

At will—*detect good*, *detect law*, *fly*, *greater dispel magic*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only), *telekinesis* (DC 22), *unholy blight* (DC 21)

3/day—*project image*

1/day—*feeblemind* (DC 22)

*5-point Power Attack

Abilities Str 32, Dex 25, Con 26, Int 22, Wis 18, Cha 24

SQ alchemic genius, amphibious, two brains, wastrilith pact

Feats Brew Potion, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Mobility, Multiattack, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Whirlwind Attack

Skills Bluff +30, Concentration +31, Craft (alchemy) +35, Intimidate +32, Knowledge (arcana) +29, Knowledge (history) +29, Knowledge (the planes) +29, Listen +27, Move Silently +30, Search +29, Sense Motive +27, Spellcraft +31, Spot +27, Swim +42

Alchemic Genius (Ex) Khala has a +6 racial bonus on Craft (alchemy) checks. He gains the Brew Potion feat as a bonus feat, and can create potions as if he had access to the cleric and the wizard spell lists.

Demonic Spittle (Su) Khala can spit a glob of demonic spittle at a target within 90 feet as a standard action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity. He must succeed on a ranged touch attack. The spittle inflicts 6d6 acid damage and one negative level. It's a DC 28 Fortitude save to remove this negative level.

Gaze (Su) Each of Khala's heads has its own gaze attack. Any creature within 30 feet of the demonic aspect must make two successful DC 27 Will saving throws each round at the beginning of its turn, the first save against Khala's fear gaze and the second against his confusion gaze. The gaze attack of Khala's left head causes a target to become frightened for 1d4 rounds. The gaze attack of Khala's right head confuses those who fail to resist its effect for 1d4 rounds. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Rot (Su) A creature touched by Khala's tentacles must make a DC 28 Fortitude save, or its flesh and bones begin to rot, suffering 1d4 points of Constitution damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

See Invisibility (Ex) Khala benefits from a constant *see invisibility* effect that cannot be dispelled.

Summon Tanar'ri **(Sp)** Khala can summon 1 retriever once per day with a 50% chance of success, or 1d4 hezrous with a 20% chance of success. This ability is the equivalent of a 5th-level spell.

Two Brains (Ex) Khala's two heads share the same personality and thoughts, but thanks to his two brains, he gains a +4 racial bonus on Will saves and is immune to charm and confusion effects. Khala cannot be flanked.

Wastrilith Pact (Su) Khala has an unholy pact with the wastrilith Xerkamat (see area **1**). He is in constant telepathic contact with the wastrilith, and by concentrating can observe the world through Xerkamat's senses. While concentrating in this manner, he may use any of his spell-like abilities, causing them to manifest as if Xerkamat had utilized them. Once per day as an immediate action, Khala can cause himself and Xerkamat to swap locations via *greater teleport*. Khala can activate this ability instantaneously, swapping locations the moment before an attack or effect would otherwise target him so that the effect instead targets the wastrilith (although he must choose to activate the ability before the attack's saving throw or damage resolves). If the wastrilith is slain, Khala loses these abilities and immediately suffers 6 negative levels for 24 hours; these negative levels fade automatically once the time passes.

KHALA'S PETS (6) **CR 9**

Advanced elite skulvyn demons

CE Large outsider (aquatic, chaotic, evil, extraplanar)

Fiend Folio 54

Init +5 ; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Listen +14, Spot +14

Aura slow (30 ft., Will DC 19)

Languages Abyssal

AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 15

hp 114 (12 HD); **DR** 5/good
SR 12
Fort +13, **Ref** +15, **Will** +7

Spd 10 ft., swim 50 ft.
Melee bite +17 (2d6+6) and
2 claws +15 (1d6+3) or
4 tail lashes +17 (1d4+6 plus wounding)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Base Atk +12; **Grp** +22

Abilities Str 22, Dex 20, Con 20, Int 3, Wis 8, Cha 12
Feats Ability Focus (slow aura), Combat Reflexes, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Lightning Reflexes, Multiattack
Skills Hide +1 (+9 in water), Listen +14, Move Silently +20, Spot +14, Swim +29

Slow Aura (Su) Living creatures within 30 feet of a skulvyn must make a DC 19 Will save or become slowed for 4 rounds. Skulvyns are immune to this aura. A creature that makes a successful saving throw is immune to that particular skulvyn's aura for one day.
Wounding (Ex) Wounds resulting from a skulvyn's tail lash bleed for an additional 1 point of damage per round thereafter. Multiple wounds result in cumulative bleeding loss. The bleeding can be stopped only by a DC 15 Heal check or the application of magical healing.

Tactics: Khala has little to say to the PCs, but if they wish to speak, he answers their questions long enough for his skulvyns to move into positions where they can quickly strike at them, keeping in touch with them via telepathy. The aspect himself stays near the black pearl on the dais once combat begins, using his offensive spell-like abilities, demonic spittle, and gaze attacks as the skulvyns emerge from the pool to engage the PCs in melee. Khala attempts to summon a retriever once the skulvyns are dead or he is reduced to 150 or fewer hit points.

Once reduced to 40 hit points or less, Khala realizes that his cause is lost. Enough *shadow pearls* have already been sent to Scuttlecove to serve Demogorgon's needs, although the shortage caused by the PCs here means that the final ritual to conjoin the Demon Prince's personalities will take quite a bit longer—long enough that, if the PCs do well in the weeks to come, it might have a chance of being disrupted by a coordinated assault on Gaping Maw.

In any event, Khala uses his wastrilith pact at this point to swap places with Xerkamat as soon as any attack that would otherwise slay him is about to strike home once he is below 40 hit points. If Xerkamat is dead, Khala instead teleports to a distant location. Once his fast healing has cured his damage, he teleports back here to attempt to finish the PCs off. He repeats these tactics until he or the party is dead.

Treasure: The giant black pearl on the dais has not yet been transformed into anything dangerous, and is worth 20,000 gp.

50. Onalati's Room

This room contains a nice bed and a writing desk, although the moisture in the air and the stink in the stone have left their mark.

If Onailati escaped from his earlier battle with the PCs, he is found here, and joins Khala in defending area **49**.

Treasure: Some of Noltus Innersol's gear lies in a discarded heap at the foot of the bed here, including a suit of *celestial armor*, a *rod of splendor*, a *periapt of Wisdom +4*, a *strand of prayer beads* with a *bead of healing* and a *bead of karma*, and a bloodstained holy symbol of Pelor. Onailati ate the rest.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

With Khala's defeat, a pair of boneshaking roars echo through the Great Temple. The aspect of Demogorgon thrashes and writhes as, bit by bit, its unholy body peels apart into writhing blots of corruption that dissolve into noxious smoke before vanishing. In only a few moments, the body bursts apart in an immense wash

Khala and Pet

Scaling the Adventure

"City of Broken Idols" is designed for a group of four 13th-level characters, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by 14th–15th level characters. Simply adjust up all NPC character levels by a number equal to the increase in average party level from 13. Don't forget to adjust treasure accordingly.

Advance Onailati and the julajimus by 2–4 Hit Dice, and give all skinwalkers 1 or 2 levels of fighter. Advance Xerkamat by 2–4 Hit Dice. Raise the Search and Disable Device DCs for all traps by 2. Replace one or two of the wraiths in area **12** with dread wraiths. Consider making the koprus half-fiends instead of fiendish, and advance each of the hezrou demons by 2–4 Hit Dice. Advance Khala by 2–4 Hit Dice.

of black smoke, and the horrific twin roars shake through the room again. The PCs have finally attracted Demogorgon's attention, and for a brief moment, the Prince of Demons appears in the boiling smoke of his aspect's failing body. His twin glares fall upon the PCs just before his countenance vanishes.

The PCs may have put a stop to the production of further *shadow pearls*, but the world is far from safe. If they recovered Throgiff's ledgers or managed to capture the tiefling, they can learn that enough *shadow pearls* have been transported to Scuttlecove and the Crimson Fleet to cause incredible damage.

In any event, the Isle of Dread is now a different place. Demogorgon's influlence over the realm has been broken, perhaps for good. The planar fogs that brought new demons to the isle never return, and over the course of several months, any demons (including skinwalkers) remaining seek to flee the isle. The koprus have been dealt a powerful blow, especially if the PCs returned stewardship of Golismorga to the aboleths in "The Lightless Depths." The jungles of the isle remain dangerous for generations to come, but now, these dangers are of a wholly Material Plane variety—the taint of the Abyss upon the Isle of Dread has been vanquished.

Yet back at Farshore, there has been a singularly sinister development. As the PCs fought against the forces of the Prince of Demons in ancient Thanaclan, other minions of the demon lord have come to Farshore. Lavinia has been taken to Scuttlecove by demons allied with the Crimson Fleet, and the Jade Ravens have commandeered her ship, the *Blue Nixie*, to save her. Yet they sail the ship into a dreadful trap, one that could well claim their lives. The Isle of Dread may have been conquered, but the need for heroes remains as great as ever.

APPENDIX: NEW MONSTER

Skinwalker

The humanoid figure is armed with a sword fitted with jagged ridges of obsidian and a shield that bears an image of a two-headed tentacled beast, yet he is no man. He wears what appears to be the hide of a demonic lion. The underside of this skin is raw muscle, fusing to the man's skin and becoming one with him. The beast's head rears up around the man's head, while its arms, hanging down from the man's shoulders, writhe like snakes ready to strike.

SKINWALKER **CR 6**

CE Medium outsider (native)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Listen +15, Spot +15

Languages Abyssal, Olman

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (+3 Dex, +4 natural, +1 shield)

hp 76 (8 HD); **DR** 10/magic

Immune fear, poison

SR 15

Fort +11, **Ref** +9, **Will** +8

Spd 40 ft.

Melee mwk macuahuitl +12/+7 (1d8+3/19–20 plus poison) and 2 claws +9 (1d6+1 plus poison) and bite +9 (1d8+1 plus poison)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +12/+7 (1d8+3/×3 plus poison)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +11

Atk Options pounce

Combat Gear violet fungus venom (10 doses)

Abilities Str 17, Dex 16, Con 20, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 15

SQ telepathic link

Feats Alertness, Multiattack, Track

Skills Concentration +16, Craft (poisonmaking) +11, Jump +26, Hide +22, Listen +15, Move Silently +22, Spot +15, Survival +13

Possessions combat gear, masterwork light wooden shield, masterwork macuahuitl, masterwork composite longbow (+3 Str) with 20 arrows

Empathic Link (Su) Skinwalkers share a communal consciousness, allowing them to sense the location and emotional state of other nearby skinwalkers. Any skinwalkers within 60 feet of each other are in constant contact. If one is aware of a particular danger, they all are. If one in the group is not flat-footed, none of them are. No skinwalker in the group is considered flanked unless they all are.

Poison (Ex) Skinwalkers use poison regularly to augment their weapons, coating their arrows, macuahuitls, claws, and bite attacks with poison. The skinwalkers of Taboo Island prefer to use violet fungus venom (Fortitude DC 14, initial and secondary damage 1d4 Str and 1d4 Con).

Pounce (Ex) If a skinwalker charges, it can make a full attack.

Skills Skinwalkers gain a +8 racial bonus on Jump, Hide, and Move Silently checks.

Skinwalkers are born to serve Demogorgon through a foul ritual similar to that undertaken by those who tread the path of the Acolyte of the Skin. During this ritual, a priest of Demogorgon flays the skin of a living man using a lash prepared from the claws and intestines of a demonic lion known as a jarilith. At the end of the process, the victim is burned alive on a pyre. Just before he perishes, the skin of a jarilith is thrown into the fire, at which point the two merge and become one.

Skinwalkers serve Demogorgon, and use ancient Olman weaponry such as spears, shields, and the traditional macuahuitl, a wooden club fitted with razor-sharp obsidian edges. This weapon is otherwise identical to a longsword.

Tito writes, "More than 20 years ago, I first got my hands on module X1: The Isle of Dread *at the geeky age of 15. I remember reading it one day while I was in bed with the flu and out of school, using an English/Italian dictionary every three or four words. I think I owe much of my 'vast, weird, and dire' English vocabulary to that experience."*

EXPERIENCE AND LEVELING UP

BY WOLFGANG BAUR
BY KYLE HUNTER

As far as many players are concerned, the most important moment in any game session is the one toward the end, when experience points are divided up. As the DM, you want to reward your players for a job well done, but sitting down to calculate CRs and add up points for each player separately isn't always the best way to do it.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

Experience points are the advancement mechanic central to an ongoing game. They are extremely important in a campaign that goes on for years, but insignificant for a one-shot or short-term game. In a short-term game, it's over before anyone advances much. In a long game, as long as progress isn't too fast or too slow, you're fine. For weekly games, advancing every four to six weeks is ideal—at that rate, you'll get to 20th level in about two years, a good long arc for any campaign.

The rules have always supported slow-but-steady advancement for all characters, though the techniques have been different. First edition D&D rewarded player characters for both killing things (even more for monsters with more hit points!) and taking their stuff. Presto: the in-game need to loot the bodies of defeated foes was born. Adventurers became pocket-rifling scavengers. The glee of looting is a little creepy, but the old-school tradition grew out of that rules base.

Second edition introduced a simpler version of the EL system, with set XP awards for each creature. Gold no longer provided experience, since the idea was that gold was its own reward, enabling PCs to buy gear, mounts, magical items,

or whatever they wanted. For that reason, the tradition of wall-to-wall looting continued, even without XP boosts. Second edition also offered story awards, especially for completing adventures. Those awards provided a little bump that improved the odds that the party would level after defeating the villain—a great time for it, especially if you want to advance the timeline or offer roleplaying elements with level advancement.

Third edition's approach to XP continued the second edition trend but made story awards optional. The standard calculations are a bit of a grind for a large group with varying levels, but the system keeps advancement steady and fair. It's especially valuable for a relatively new DM, who may misjudge advancement over a long campaign.

If you don't want to bother with a lot of math, I'd recommend the freeform experience system from the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 39. Award 75 XP times average party level for each character every time the players defeat an encounter, and up it to 100 XP for tough encounters. Even simpler, award 300 XP times average party level to each character each session. You'll save a lot of time—time you can use to talk about the heroes and where the campaign is headed, or to make leveling up more entertaining.

LEVELING UP

Older editions of the game and even 3.5 talk about "training" as an option for PCs. On page 197 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, this is described as costing 50 gp a week, with each week gaining a character one rank in a skill, or two weeks for a feat. I rarely use this approach, as it takes all the fun out of powering up and turns heroic advancement into a kind of driver's license test. Real heroes don't take driver's ed, so unless your players are genuinely fond of it, I recommend earning class abilities and growing into power. What follows is my own system.

Partial Advancement

When people hit that next level, they're impatient. Players want their improved stats right away, and anything that delays the power-ups is usually not appreciated. So don't fight it: make the adjustments to skills, hit points, saving throws, and maybe even standard feats (but not fighter bonus feats) right away. Then ask them whether they want to pay a trainer or pass a heroic test. I'll bet you most PCs don't reach for their coin purse.

Growing Into Power

A PC who is entering a new class or prestige class for the first time should have some special scene to mark the occasion: heroes don't just suddenly drop their holy symbols and take up arcane arts overnight. But how?

One option is to advance the timeline. Another is to say that they've been studying with a fellow character in the party who already understands the class. To mark their understanding of the new feats, spells, and abilities that come with the new class, describe a moment when the hero first uses one of those powers. From that point on, the character is fully part of the class.

My favorite option, though, is the test or initiation that can be completed with a single die roll.

The One-Roll Test

When a hero advances to a new level of power or into a new class entirely, hold back their juiciest class abilities until they meet the bar as heroes. Heroes need to earn those stripes with a vigil, an initiation, or an anointment of some kind before they reach that next plateau.

You don't want to do this for every level, because if everyone at the table does it, it's not really special. But think about the characters you've got: The perfect breaks for spellcasting classes are at each new spell level. A great break for druids is at 5th level when they gain wildshape and 3rd-level spells. At 4th a ranger gains an animal companion and spells, and a rogue gains improved uncanny dodge at 8th.

When those abilities are going to be added to a character, tell them that they don't gain them until they pass a test. This isn't a typical combat moment: it's more about what that particular player is shooting for and the myths that swirl beneath the ideal of a particular class, things that mechanics don't necessarily show during a combat-heavy game. Take a look at the table of suggestions on the next page, choose something that the character is good at, and set the DC fairly low, giving them at least a 75% chance of success. The one-roll test isn't about showcasing their weaknesses, but about adding flavor to the level-up.

Describe the circumstances, the danger of the test, and the heroic difficulty of reaching further and showing greater skill than ordinary people, then ask for one roll or check. Why just one roll? Because you want it to be quick, and several players may reach a level milestone at the same time.

If the player passes the check, great! He'll remember gaining his new powers through a particular story moment, potentially add a title to his character's name, or maybe just shrug and go back to rolling hit points. But whatever he does with it, he'll have gained a little more character detail as well as upping the character stats. The fighter didn't learn his Greater Two-Weapon Fighting just anywhere—he'll be happy to remind the group that he learned it while single-handedly covering their retreat from a bar brawl against ogres and giants

THE CASE FOR INDIVIDUAL XP

Rather than dividing up individual points for each character, many DMs assume that all players did equally well and show no favoritism in awarding experience. This is great for group unity, but not so hot for encouraging players to actually play well. The guy who spent the game watching TV or surfing the Web while constantly asking, "Is it my turn to attack?" is not earning XP at the same rate as the player who makes the villain-defeating plan, tells the jokes, and writes up the summary to email to everyone before the next game.

You can punish the lousy player by awarding poor XP, but that doesn't solve the problem as directly as saying, "If you're not playing, you're not getting any experience." Half-measures are sometimes too subtle for someone who's only playing with half an ear anyway. If they up and quit the game, you've just lost the worst player at your table—and your group still wins.

MONTAGE: THE PASSING YEARS

The idea of learning new skills, feats, and classes slowly isn't a fundamentally bad one, but I think it's more effective when it's combined with the passing of much more than a week or two. Great heroes like King Arthur and his knights were questing knights-errant for decades, but they also lived through years of peace and plenty. Rogues and scoundrels like Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser only sought adventure when they were broke from spending all their cash on wine and women. Again, time passed between adventures.

Leveling up can be the same sort of thing: it happens during the months or years between the big adventures. If your party completes an adventure and you don't have a second plotline urging them on, tell them they learn their new skills, spells, and feats over time. If level breaks arrive while they are in a dungeon, go ahead and award XP and level up. But if you want your campaign to have more of an epic sweep, try to arrange for level breaks to fall at the end of adventures and advance the timeline by years between some levels.

in the Norselands. That's a one-roll level check that sticks in a player's mind without a lot of extra play time.

Bitter Experience

Not all checks succeed. If the player fails the check, he's still got his new hit points, saves, and skills, so he's not "missing" the level entirely. And characters can try the test more than once, with a gap in between of at least a week and possibly months or years, if you are using the montage method. Let a player roll on a level test three times. If all three fail, I usually say, "Your hero isn't remembered for what he did at that level, but he learned from bitter experience." Move on.

Other players will probably rib him about it, but that's ok. Even a hero doesn't win them all, and it will make the next victory sweeter.

The Upside

Why should characters risk the humiliation and possible delay of not passing the roll? Partly because it's fun, and maybe because you require it, but you should reward the risk-taking players directly. Characters who choose the heroic test and succeed on the first try should gain an action point, a luck point, some sanity points, or some other small bonus.

Even better, the risk-taking heroes should gain recognition among their peers and the commoners. Everyone knows the ranger who tracked down the White Stag and the monk who answered the riddle of the Empty Fist; no one remembers the ones who leveled quietly. These achievements are calling cards, and they expand a PC's heroic backstory.

And if players refuse to take the risk of not getting the power right away? Make them pay 50 gp/week for training.

Level Tests

Class	Task	Check
Barbarian	Wrestle a bear into submission	Opposed grapple
	Speak to a tribal spirit	Fortitude save
	Steal a feather from an owlbear's nest	Survival
Bard	Placate a rioting mob	Diplomacy
	Sing a song that wins a noble's heart	Perform
	Remember the truename of a villain	Bardic Knowledge
Cleric	Three days of fasting and prayer	Concentration
	Answer a riddle of theology	Knowledge (religion)
	Make a pilgrimage to a healer's shrine	Heal
Druid	Collect the herbs that heal a plague	Knowledge (nature)
	Find the chicks of a griffon killed by orcs	Spot
	Calm a rabid wolf among sheep	Wild empathy
Fighter	Bend an iron bar into a circle	Strength check
	Win a bar fight—against ogres	Opposed melee attack
	Make a merchant pay your legendary bar tab	Intimidate
Monk	Defeat the Empty Fist technique	Sense Motive
	Answer a riddle of enlightenment	Knowledge (religion)
	Travel to mountaintop guru in one night	Climb
Paladin	Win the golden ring at a joust	Ride
	End a feud between elves and dwarves	Diplomacy
	Recite all the names of a noble's lineage	Knowledge (nobility)
Ranger	Track a white stag	Survival
	Lead an expedition into unknown lands	Knowledge (geography)
	Win an archery contest against elves	Opposed ranged attack
Rogue	Pick two pockets at once	Sleight of Hand
	Hide from the watch in broad daylight	Hide
	Convince a dragon you didn't steal from him	Bluff
Sorcerer	Perform a day-long ritual warding	Concentration
	Comprehend draconic magic	Knowledge (arcana)
	Resist the lure of a fey temptress	Will save
Wizard	Unravel a forgotten empire's language	Decipher Script
	Make friends with an outsider arcanist	Knowledge (the planes)
	Defeat a rival in a wizard's duel	Spellcraft

CONCLUSION

The degree to which you track experience points probably has more to do with your play style and the sophistication of your players than it does with any real requirement of the game. People care deeply about the results of gaining experience, but for experienced players, making new levels memorable and granting heroes greater recognition is as important as the number in the XP box on a character sheet.

Wolfgang Baur is a noted adventure designer and the author of "Expedition to the Demonweb Pits" and "Castle Shadowcrag." He discusses his freelance work and upcoming patron projects at wolfgangbaur.com.

I STOLE WHAT?

BY GREG CUGINI
BY KYLE HUNTER

A city presents the Sleight of Hand artist with an excellent opportunity to practice his craft. Crowded streets, bustling citizens, and plenty of noise and confusion all help the cutpurse in his pursuit of ill-gotten gains. There are times, though, that the pickpocket gets more than he bargained for, both good and bad. Because as any Tolkien fan knows, people carry more than just gold pieces in their pockets.

The following list provides DMs with a number of unique items to plant on NPCs populating their cities. Use these items to add a bit of flavor to downtime between adventures, or flesh them out into memorable encounters and even adventures. Some of these items might have magical properties or monetary value, but these details are left for you to determine. Due to the nature of many of these items, their theft will likely be noticed before long, and there's no telling what lengths the offended parties might go to in retrieving them.

1 A small piece of ivory covered in intricate scrimshaw. The carving depicts a kraken dragging a large ship down to the bottom of the sea.
2 A small spyglass. When anyone looks into it, instead of seeing their target, they see a derelict castle sitting on an island in the center of a lake.
3 The private journal of a well-known countess. Filled with court intrigue, gossip, debauchery, and treason, the journal is a raunchy and incriminating glimpse inside the private lives of the local nobility.

4 A small stuffed doll with one eye missing and tattered stuffing poking out. Anyone making a DC 20 Spot check notices a note tucked away inside the doll. The note, written by what appears to be a young girl, details her kidnapping and imprisonment. On the back is a crude map.

5 A collection of gears belonging to a modron. A DC 20 Knowledge (the planes) check reveals their origin. For reasons unknown, a group of modrons is currently prowling the plane looking for them.

6 A star chart that does not correspond to any known objects in the sky. Notes in an unknown language cover the map, and anyone making a successful DC 30 Decipher Script recognizes them as coordinates and distances.

7 A large bronze skeleton key that is uncomfortably warm to the touch. The key remains warm even if immersed in water or frozen.

8 An aquamarine statuette of Eadro. The statuette feels wet to the touch, yet is completely dry. A successful DC 20 Knowledge (religion) check reveals the importance of the statue as a holy relic to merfolk.

9 An ornate, hollowed-out triceratops horn. A successful DC 25 Knowledge (geography) check recognizes it as a battle horn belonging to a tribe of jungle barbarians. Legend holds that blowing it could have grave consequences.

10 Several gold coins of unknown currency. They are octagonal in shape, and look newly minted. Embossed on the front is a dragon's skull, and engraved on the back are the words, "Kingdom of the Skies."

11 A sealed earthenware jug with a tiny viper inside. Written on the lid in exquisite calligraphy is the note, "All my love, all my life."

12 A black hourglass filled with white sand. The hourglass, which is made of wood, feels much heavier than it should. An inscription on the base reads, "Only the end is certain."

13 A small book of prayers to an unknown deity. The book is in bad condition, with a broken spine and gaps where pages have been torn out. The rust-colored cover appears to be dyed with blood, flaking off and staining any skin or fabric that comes into contact with it. What's more, the sections where pages have been torn out appear to be actively bleeding...

14 A rolled-up oil painting depicting dwarves battling demons in a large cavern. The unsigned painting is incredibly lifelike. On the back of the painting is the title, "Closing the Gate."

15 Winter gloves made from polar bear fur. Anyone making a successful DC 20 Spot check notices a small mechanism inside the gloves. Triggering this mechanism causes bear claws to spring out from the fingers of the gloves.

16 A dried pseudodragon claw. When held, the claw feels warm to the touch and strangely lifelike.

17 An alchemical silver dagger with an abnormally long hilt and crossguards. Etched into the blade are a number of leering faces, each somewhere between a wolf and a man. A successful DC 20 Knowledge (history) check recognizes it as the Lupucroix, a notorious weapon designed for use against lycanthropes.

18 The truename of a minor demon, Malcathon, written in blood on a white dragon scale. Anyone making a successful DC 25 Knowledge (the planes) check can easilly deduce its nature.

19 A piece of human skin bearing an intricate tattoo. A successful DC 25 Knowledge (history) check reveals that the tattoo belonged to a famous psychic warrior who disappeared over a hundred years ago.

20 A hollowed-out pixie skull with a bundle of black rose petals tucked inside. Anyone who holds the skull to his ear can hear faint screams.

21 A single golden dragon scale on a plain leather thong. Inscribed on the scale are the words, "Courage, Honor, Faith."

22 A small, unadorned mirror. Anyone gazing at his reflection in the mirror sees it quickly begin to age, picking up speed until it reaches the end of the viewer's potential lifespan, at which point the image decomposes into dust. From then on, the mirror does not reflect that person.

23 A tiny cutting taken from a bloodthorn plant, in a small clay pot filled with gray soil. The cutting is growing well, and is quite hungry. A DC 20 Knowledge (nature) check is required to identify and properly handle the plant. If the check fails, the plant attacks whoever picks it up.

24 A live mouse with the crest of a noble family dyed into the fur on its back. A tiny wedding veil has been glued to its scalp.

25 A lady's handkerchief, soaked in blood. The initials "M.F.S." are embroidered on one corner. The blood is not only fresh—it's still warm.

26. A small flipbook filled with unflattering cartoons of the town mayor. When the pages are flipped, the character does a bawdy dance.

27. An elegantly embroidered change purse, filled with a sticky morass of what looks like fish eggs. Inside each tiny orange globe rests a twitching embryo.

28. An enormous crocheted hat riddled with large holes. A DC 10 Knowledge (nature) check notices that the holes are perfectly positioned to accomodate a horse's eyes and ears.

29. A long fake moustache affixed to a prosthetic nose of the highest caliber, along with a small bottle of spirit gum.

30. A partially-completed love poem that ends with the line "and hair so orange." The rest of the page is filled with scratched-out lines and increasingly frantic-looking scribbles.

TWENTY-TWO NIGHTMARES

BY TIM HITCHCOCK,
BY KYLE HUNTER,

For centuries, humanity has struggled to understand the meaning of dreams and nightmares. Some speculate that they present us with clues to our own fears and desires, others see them as omens sent by supernatural forces, and still others believe them to be windows to realms beyond the physical world. Below are twenty-two nightmarish descriptions with any number of uses—to illustrate a negative reading on an *augury* spell, provide a supernatural hint or plot hook, instill guilt for a wrongfully committed action, or simply terrify a character.

1. You hang upside down hundreds of feet above a gorge, supported by thick iron manacles shackled around your ankles. From a ten-foot chain locked around your neck swings a dead crow with two silver keys clasped tightly in its rigor-locked beak.

2. Bound in thick ropes, you stand barefoot at the edge of a large cast-iron cauldron filed to the rim with boiling lead. A sulfurous steam rises from the surface, burning your nostrils. In the distance, you hear soft drumming.

3. It's nighttime, and you and your companions sit on the ground, huddled around a blazing campfire. Everyone wears a wide smile and appears to be laughing and chatting amicably, yet you cannot hear the conversation. As you study your companions, you notice deep and grisly slash wounds across all of

their throats. You scream, but no sound comes from your lips. Your hands fly to your own throat, only to come away soaked in blood.

4. Your veins begin to burn and writhe beneath your flesh as hundreds of worms burrow through them, occasionally piercing the skin.

5. You wade up to your neck in a river of bleached bones that flows through a bare and arid landscape. Smooth-barked thorn trees spill their jagged, leafless roots down into the river, swelling and throbbing like hungry serpents. As you fight your way upstream, the roots lash at you as if possessed.

6. Large blocks of chiseled, pale-veined stone encase your hands and feet. Before you, a long rope extends for an unknown distance through a field of clouds. A voice in your head keeps telling you to walk forward, but each time you take a step, the rope bends lower into the clouds, straining dangerously.

7. Intense sunlight warms your face. The rays are so bright that you fear opening your eyes, but then you feel the presence of something very close to you, watching. As it stares, every hair on your body stands on end and begins quivering. Suddenly, it feels as if your entire body bursts into flame, but still you are unable to open your eyes.

8. Long nails pierce your hands and feet, pinning you face-up to a hard wooden plank. Thousands of small pins inserted into your shoulders, chest, abdomen, and upper thighs form an intricate pattern resembling a flying bird. The clear sky suddenly fills with doves that descend upon you, painfully pushing the pins deeper as they land upon them.

9. You sit in thick, mossy mud at the bottom of a deep well. The dark sky above provides only the faintest light, forcing you to strain your eyes in order to see the three shadowy robed figures at the well's edge. The whisper to each other softly in a strange tongue you can barely hear and do not understand.

10. Staring down at your feet, you notice one of your toes has turned gangrenous. Even as you watch, the rot spreads, and you burst into a cold sweat. Involuntarily, you clench your fists and suddenly realize you grasp a newly sharpened cleaver in your right hand.

11. You awake to the scent of strong spices and perfumes permeating everything. You try to move, but begin to panic as you realize that some sort of cocoon binds you. You swing softly, blind and helpless, as something large moves toward you.

12. You sit eagerly on the edge of a cold clay table inside a dimly lit gray building. A witchdoctor wearing healer's robes and a long leather shawl embossed with mystic symbols enters. A steel and gold mask with large tusks and wild straw hair hides his face. He gingerly reaches into a large leather sack and draws forth a tremendous, cat-sized leech and slaps it onto the back of your neck. You feel only a slight pinch and then hear horrid sucking sounds as a cold wave of numbness drains all feeling from your limbs.

13. Seated at a huge oak table with oversized place settings in an empty dining room, your stomach growls impatiently. Soon, a small girl in a golden silk dress with an ocher complexion arrives and silently places a huge covered platter before you. A delectable smell wafts from the dish, but when you uncover it, the only thing before you is a mountain of gold dust. The small girl grasps you tightly by the throat and, using a giant spoon, painfully force-feeds you the dust.

14. An ox-yoke is locked around your neck. With blistered feet, you pull a black iron plow through the cracked soil of a graveyard, turning up furrows of bones and decomposing corpses.

15. Pulsing colors swirl before you, and your entire body begins itching uncontrollably. You realize your eyes are closed and force them open, only to discover swarms of black flies enveloping your entire body. To your horror, they busy themselves laying thousands of maggots beneath your skin.

16. You walk barefoot through a flowering thicket. Arriving on the other side, you stop before a sparkling pool just long enough to catch a glimpse of your reflection. Thick purple welts over your legs highlight dozens of puncture wounds. Slowly, the field behind you transforms into an ocean of writhing serpents whose bared fangs drip with glistening poison.

17. An old woman approaches you with a needle and thread. She sits you in a chair and carefully stitches your mouth closed. For some reason, you find yourself unable to protest. Next, she sews shut your nostrils, then your right eye. When she finishes, she kisses your cheek with a maternal smile, and the last thing you see is her crooked, withered finger as she gouges out your unstitched left eye.

18. You walk naked with a herd of cattle, their heads lowered. Examining the bulls, you notice a heavily scarred brand on each of their flanks. You recognize it as a holy symbol, but for some reason are unsure of which faith it represents. Unconsciously, your hand brushes your own thigh. Feeling a thick raised scar, you drop your eyes and discover an identical brand on your own leg.

19. You stand before an execution block, surrounded by a cheering crowd. At first you tremble, but then you see your own fingers curled around a gargantuan executioner's axe. A royal soldier presents you with a condemned prisoner, his head hidden inside a burlap sack. As you raise the axe to strike, the guard removes the sack, revealing your father's face as he stares up at you, imploringly.

20. Walking along a sunny beach, you suddenly feel nauseous, double over in pain, and begin vomiting thousands of small fiddler crabs.

21. It's a sunny day and you're chopping wood deep in the forest, enjoying the sounds of birdsong and squirrel chatter. Suddenly your axes makes a strange noise, and you look down to find blood welling up from the split in the log. At your side, the stack of wood becomes a pile of severed limbs, and the trees around you begin to scream.

22. You're walking down a crowded street. People smile at you as you pass, but as they do their teeth grow longer before your eyes, extending until the horrified pedestrians can no longer open their mouths to scream. With sickening cracks, their jaws begin to break.

DOWNER XXII

FOOL'S ERRAND

Once again, I get friendly with strangers and it bites me in the ass. The fact that everyone and their brother can change shape makes it irritatingly difficult to tell friends from foes. Ditching Ba-Roosha's iron goons was easy enough, but now I'm stuck in Sigil without a copper to my name.

DOWNER TARANTULA, DROW

GOALKEEPER, AURUMACH RILMANI

BA'ROOSHA, GITHYANKI

BENZINGER KALRO, RAKSHASA

KROIPH, COPPER DRAGON

QUEEN WENCH, PAELIRYON DEVIL

Story and art by **Kyle Stanley Hunter.** Lettering by **Sean Glenn.** Downer is ©2007 Kyle Stanley Hunter. A **Super Unicorn** production. **www.superunicorn.com**

BY THE CONCORDANT HUB, WHAT'S GOING ON!
THE GAME BOARD IS UPTURNED.
TO BE CONTINUED

DEEP GROTTO
Map of Mystery
Rapids
Luminescent Fungus
Log Bridge
To Forgotten Tombs
Waterfalls
Ledge
Curtain of Vines from Surface
Moss
Stalagmite Formations
To Drow Outpost
Shaft of Sunlight
Limestone Curtain Wall
Fungus Patches
Rock Cleft
Waterfalls
Ledge
Underground Lake
Whirlpool
1 square = 5 feet
River
WEST

DUNGEON #145

MAP & HANDOUT SUPPLEMENT

GREYHAWK'S EXAG: CITY OF CLAY
DUNGEON
MONSTERS WALK THE STREETS!
FIGHT THE
OF THE ISLE OF DREAD!
GNOLLS • SKINWALKERS • GIANT FIENDISH OYSTERS

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Julie Dillon

THE DISTRACTION

by Tim Hitchcock

A band of settlers awaits certain death upon the vicious blades of massing gnoll hordes. Can the PCs distract the ravenous army of savage humanoids long enough for reinforcements to arrive? A D&D adventure for 3rd-level characters.

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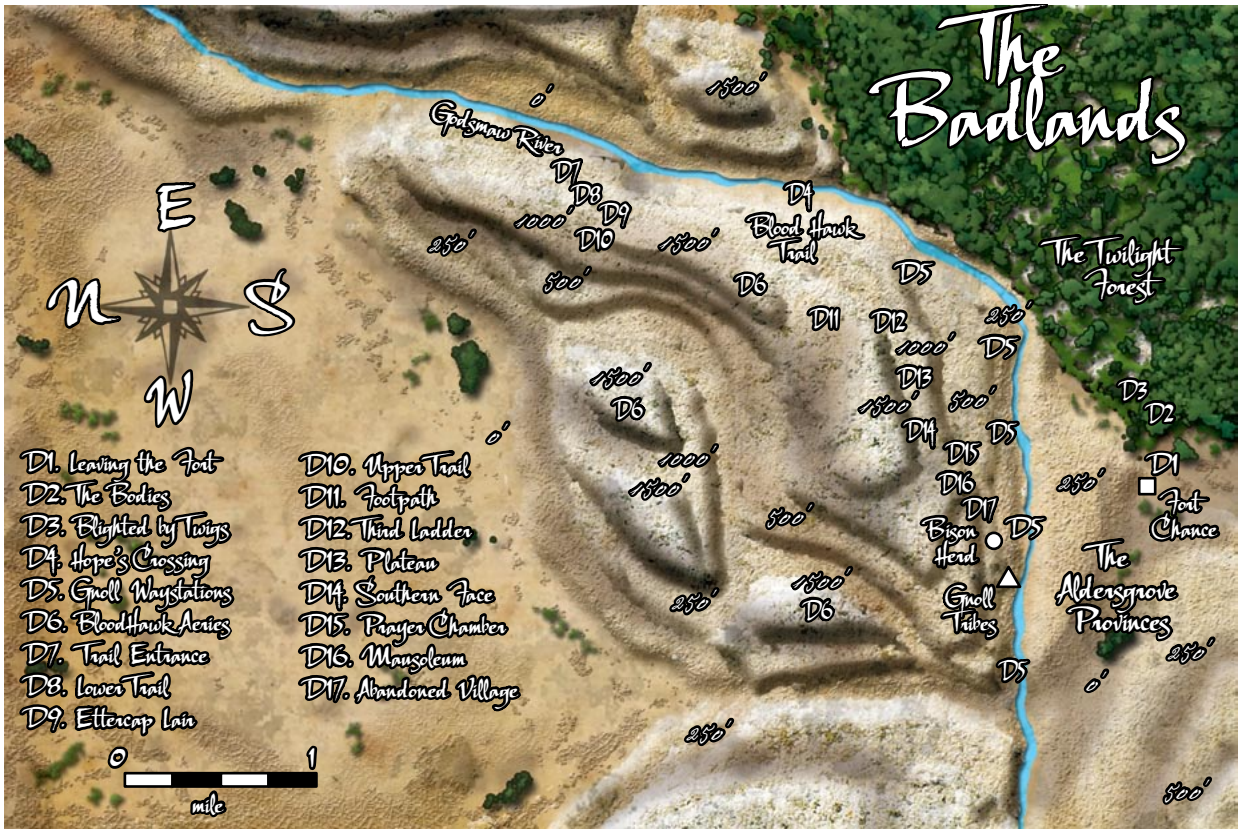

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Julie Dillon

Nughoak

Julie Dillon

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UDON with Todd Gak, Jim Zubkavich, and Shane Law

VILE ADDICTION

by Tom Ganz, Stefan Happ, Stephen S. Greer, B. Matthew Conklin III, and Ashavan Doyon

A horrific drug has seized the population of the strange city of Exag, yet confronting its source only reveals the true extent of a dire new threat. Part one of the Seeds of Sehan campaign arc, this is a D&D adventure for 8th-level characters.

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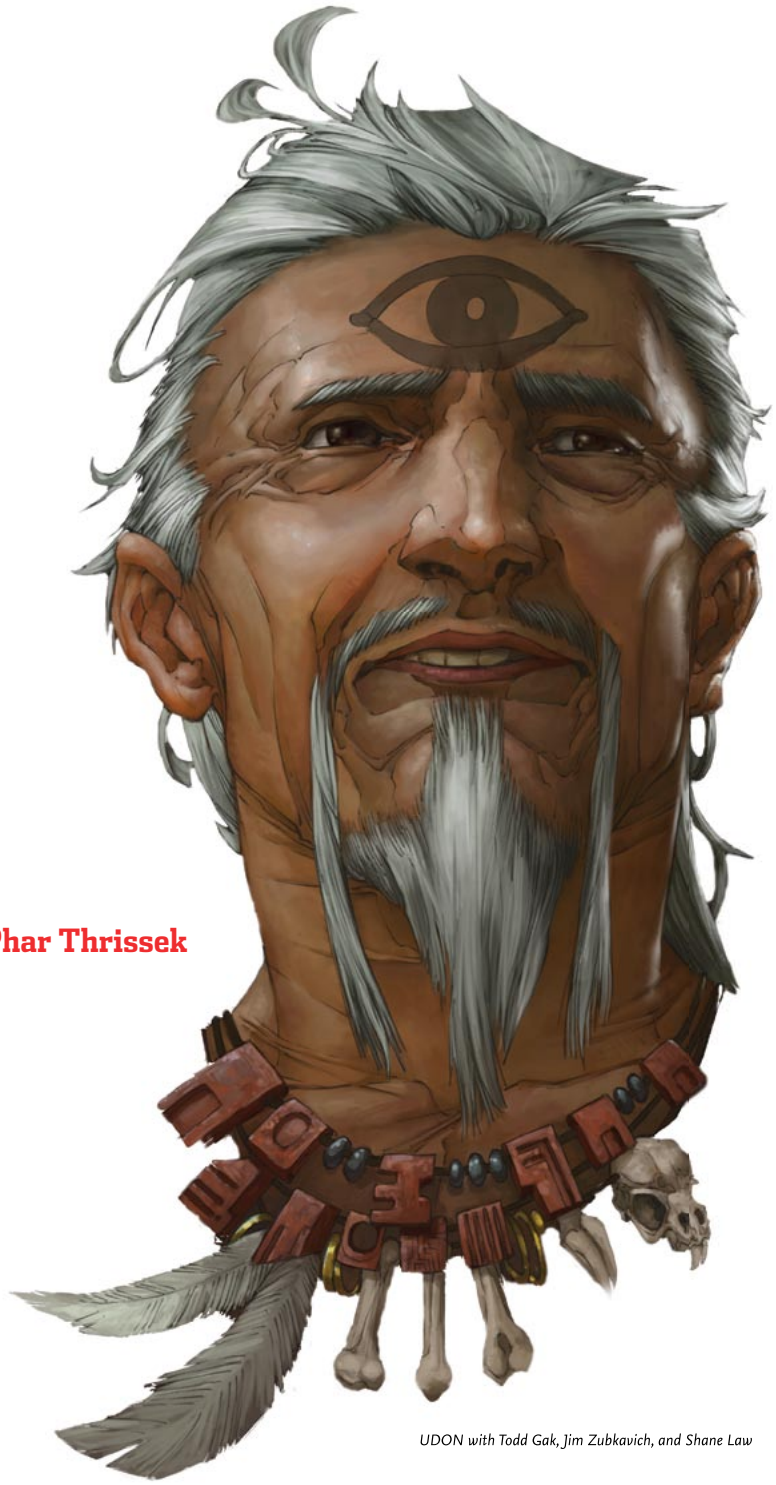
Pan'Phar Thrissek



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Child of Sehan

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UDON

BACKDROP: EXAG

by Stefan Happ, Stephen S. Greer, B. Matthew Conklin III, Tom Ganz, and Ashavan Doyon

Explore the ancient streets of Exag, a secluded city whose secrets and mysteries are among the oldest in history.

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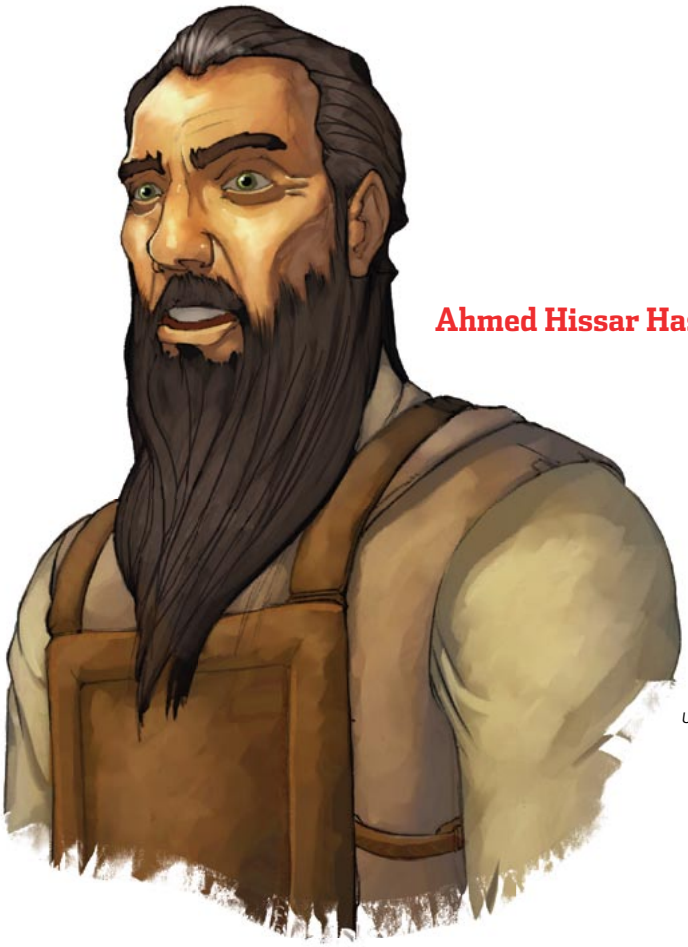

UDON

Ahmed Hissar Hassan

UDON

Banafar Thragyeb

UDON

Abby Starbottom

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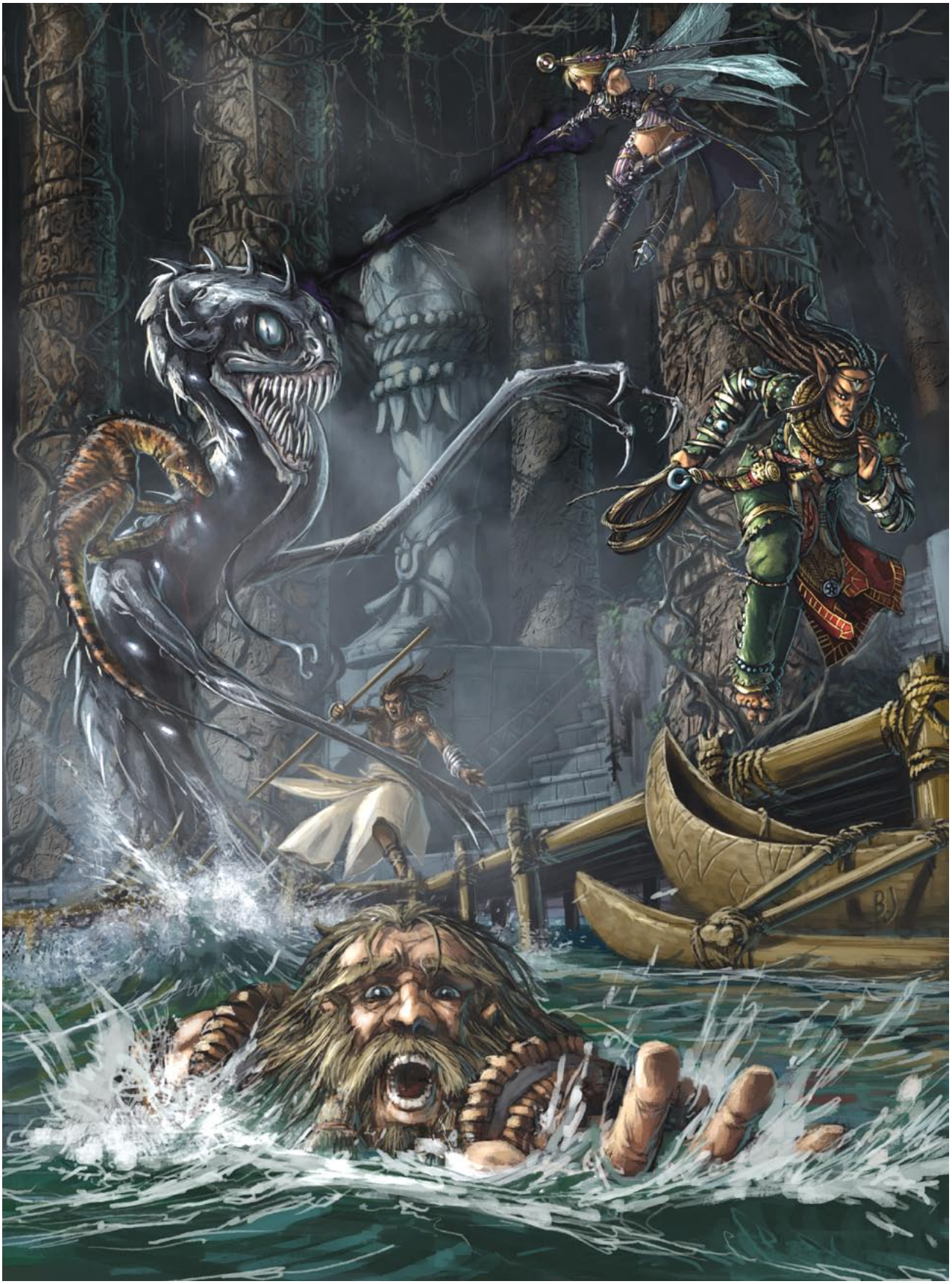

Ben Wootten

CITY OF BROKEN IDOLS

by Tito Leati

The central mesa of the Isle of Dread is taboo to the locals, a place shrouded in mystery and cloaked in rumor. The time has come to confront the evil that dwells atop the island's savage crown. A Savage Tide Adventure Path scenario for 13th-level characters.

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Warren Mahy

To Vesserin Catherly—
My friend, I write you this letter to inform you of a most terrible discovery. Know first that the man who carries this letter is also a friend, and that his skills and techniques for standing against the demonic host may well serve you and the people of the Seven Villages well in the months to come. Learn from him, for what he has to teach is of great value.

But to the news at hand. I had decided to follow up on the Olman tales of the village of Mantru, that isolated tribe dwelling in Thanaclan's shadow atop the plateau. I had hoped to contact this village, to bring the Sun Father's hope to them, for as you will recall, I believe I can use their worship of violent Tonatiuh to my favor. Pelor and this savage deity have more in common than my brethren might admit. The Stone of the Sun and the Moon all but proves it. By showing the villagers of Mantru Pelor's wisdom, I had hoped to civilize them.

Yet from all appearances, Mantru may be lost. You are well aware of the rumors that something dire has taken up residence in the City of Broken Idols. The Seven Villages call the central plateau taboo for strong and true reasons. Yet what dwells on high is no longer content with the ruins of Thanaclan. The man who brings you this letter is proof of this fear, for his tribe was slaughtered by savage heathens from the central plateau. Men who wear the skins of demons, and who kept those they capture alive for unknowable reasons before they return to their lair in the City of Broken Idols.

I have seen evidence of these heathens at work elsewhere, and have even encountered some of their dead. Yet I do not fear them, for no demon can withstand the purity of my convictions. I shall lead my new followers atop the central plateau. We shall deliver the children of Mantru from their oppressors and defeat the fiends. Yet should clouds or the fall of night keep Pelor from my side, and should I fall, know that the evil that broods in the City of Broken Idols does not rest. If you should seek to follow in my footsteps, bring with you the Stone of the Sun and the Moon. I have come to believe that it may hold the key to what destroyed Thanaclan low so long ago.

I do not fear for my own life. Pelor has set me upon this course for a reason. With Bulgan's constant companionship, I am never alone on my quest. But I do fear what these fiends might try if none beyond me take up arms against them. If I do not return, I ask only that you fight as you can, and that this missive be sent on to Lady Gosalar of the Sasserine Dawnhouse as my final testament.

Your Friend,
Noltus Innersol

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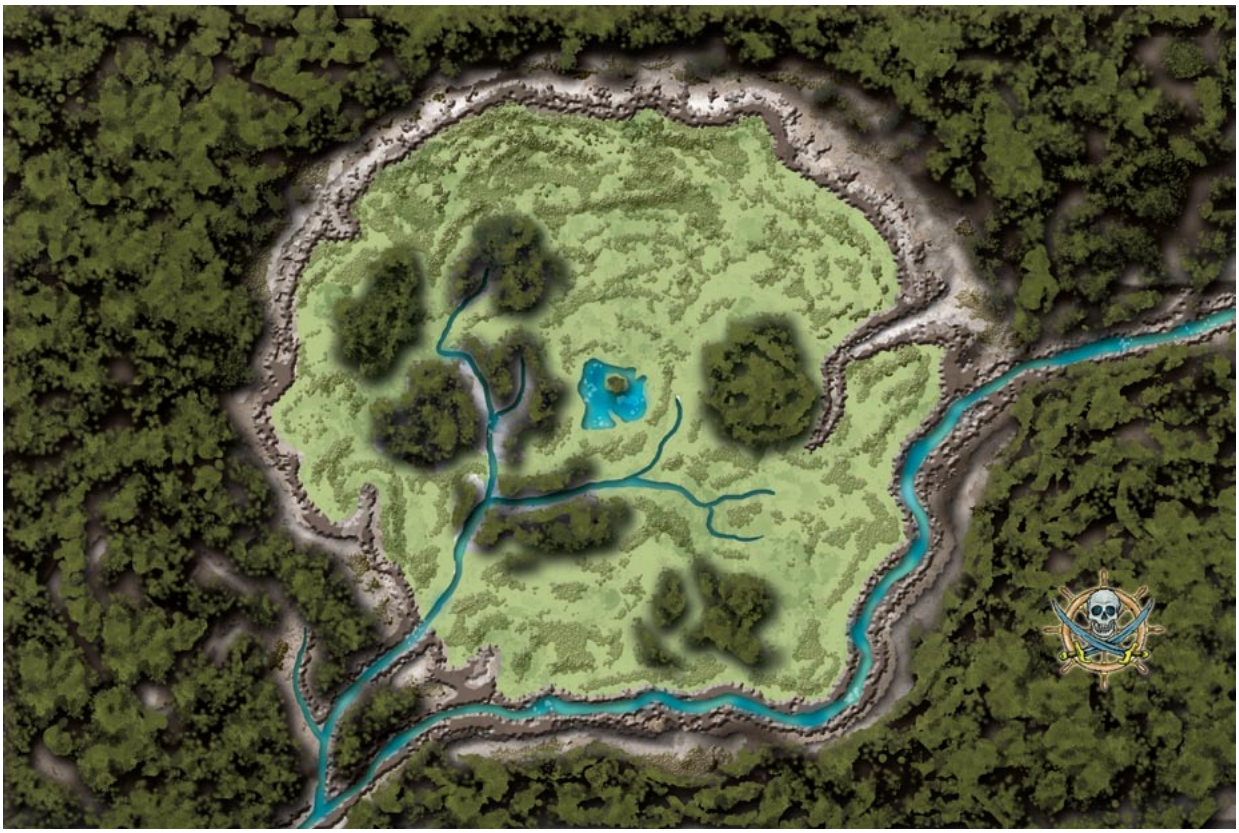

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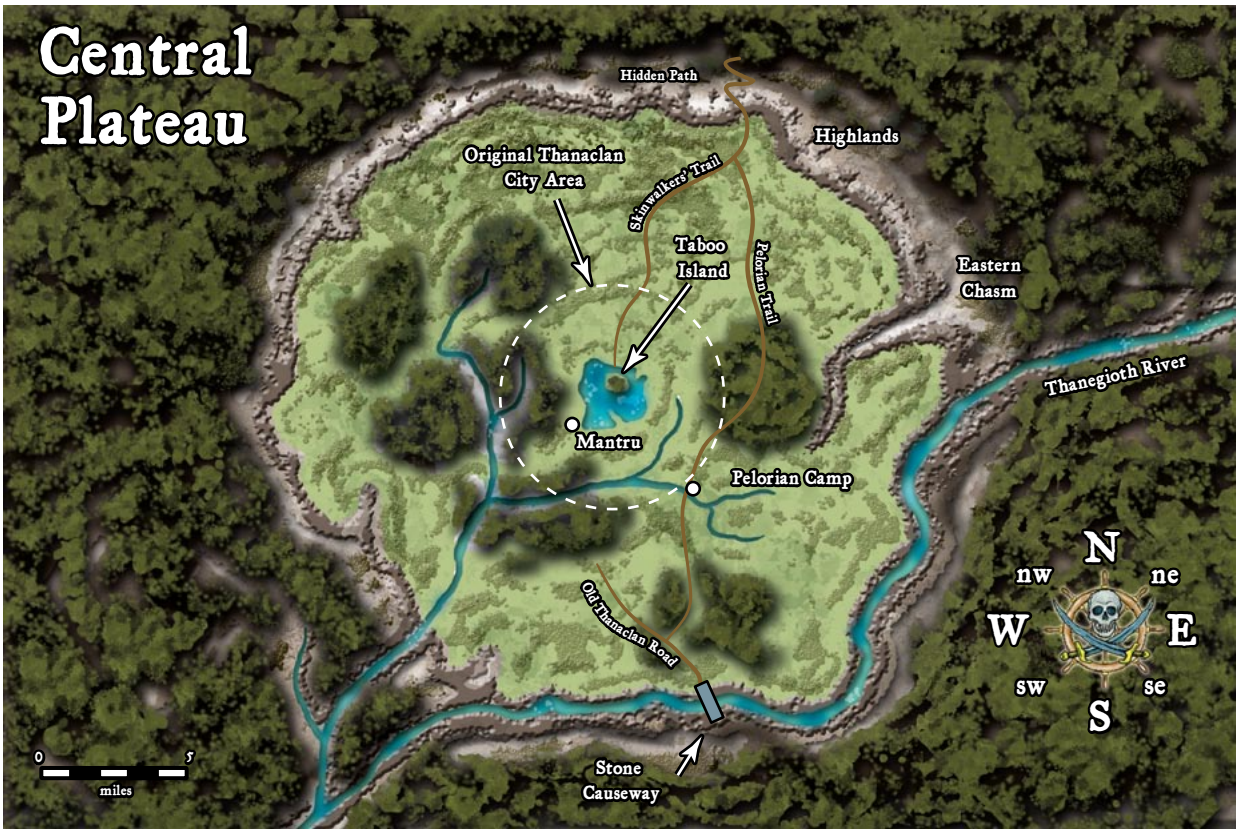

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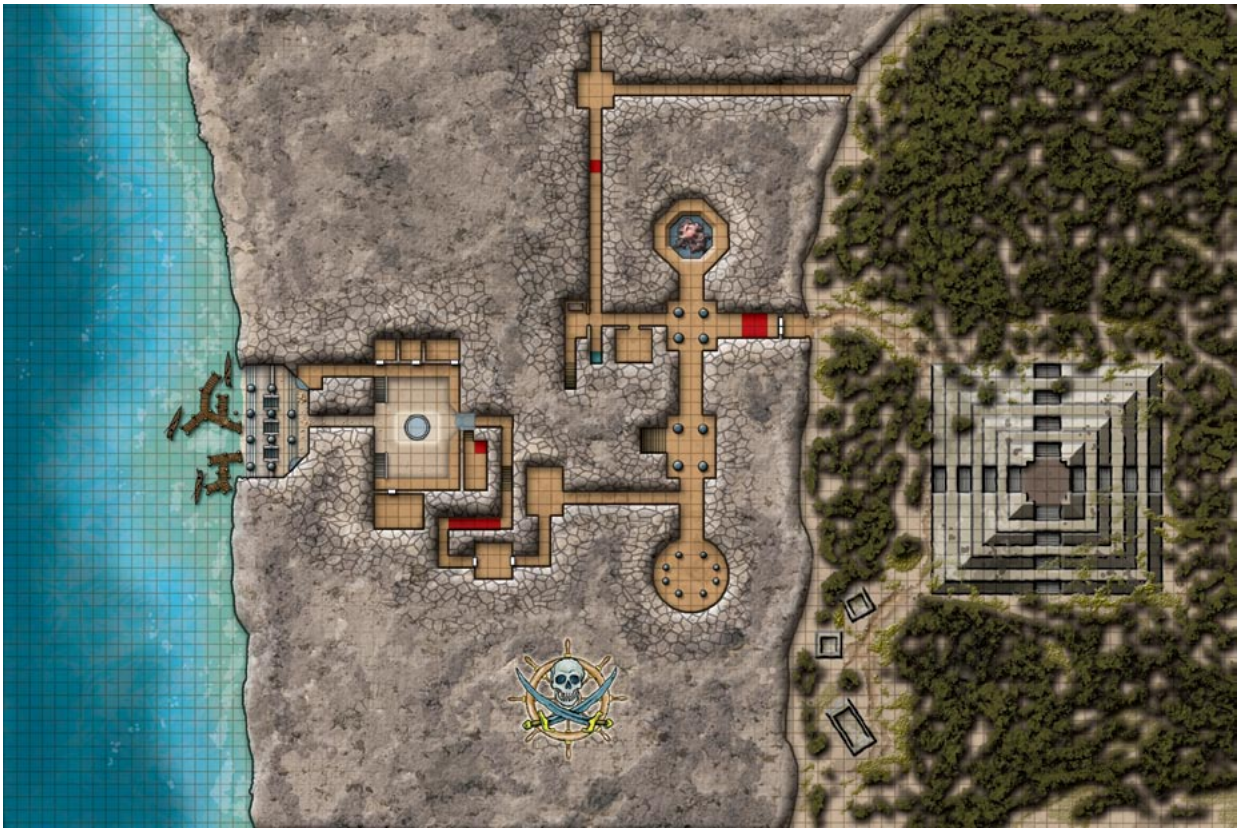

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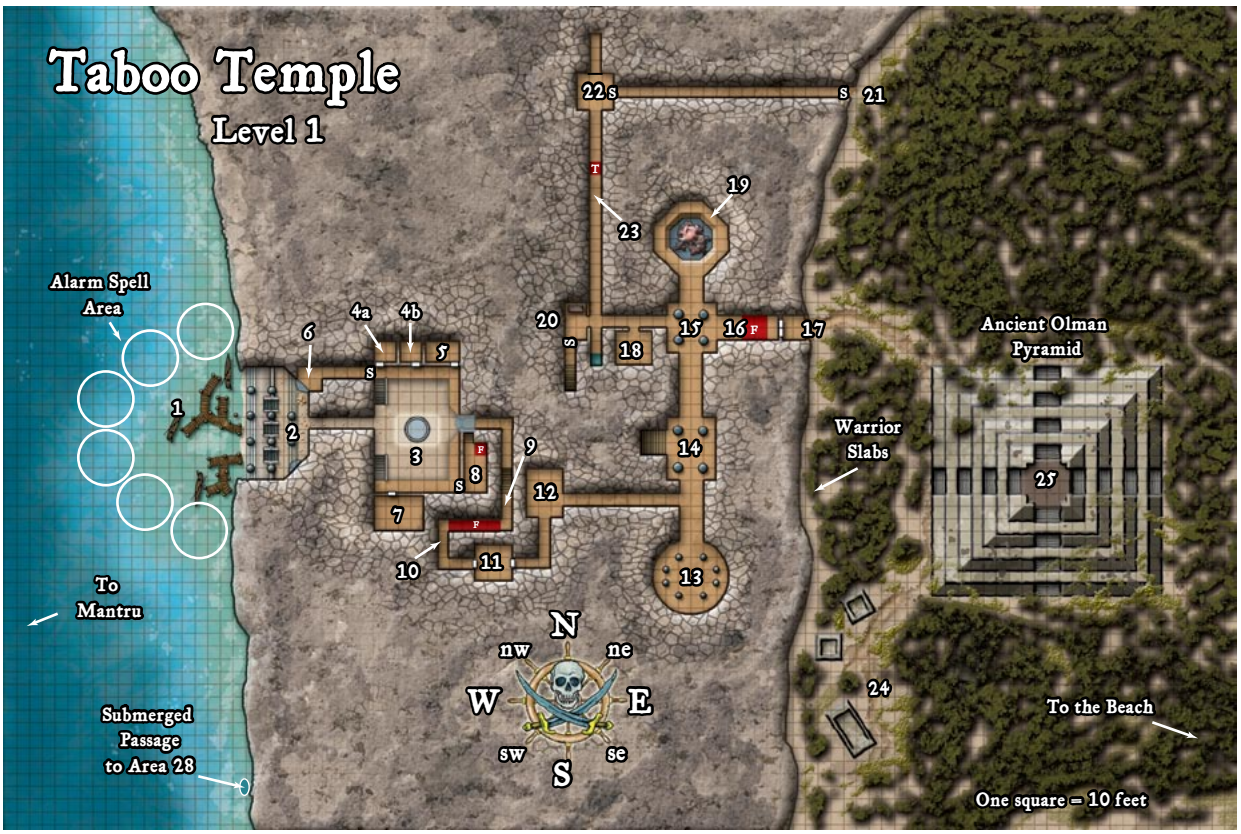

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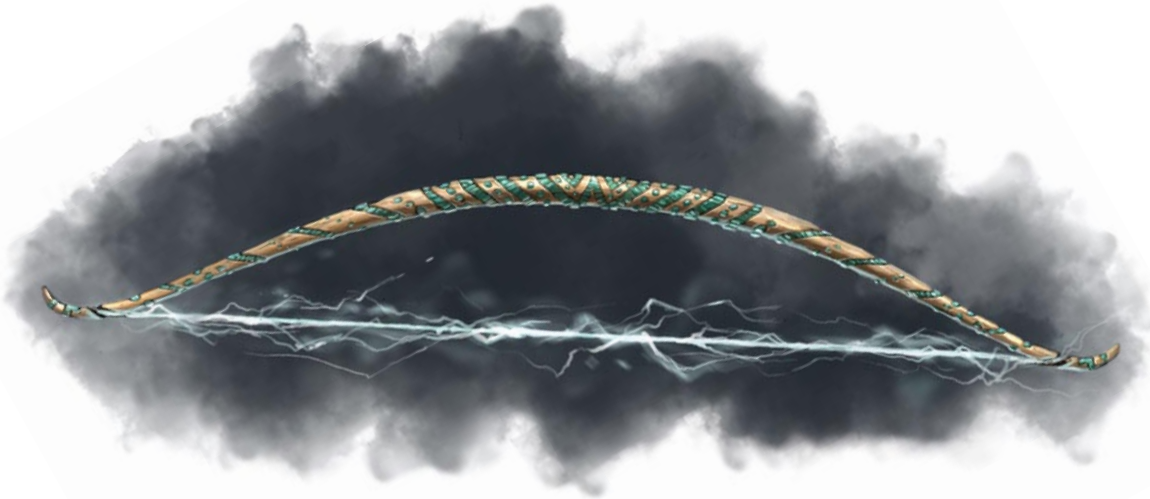

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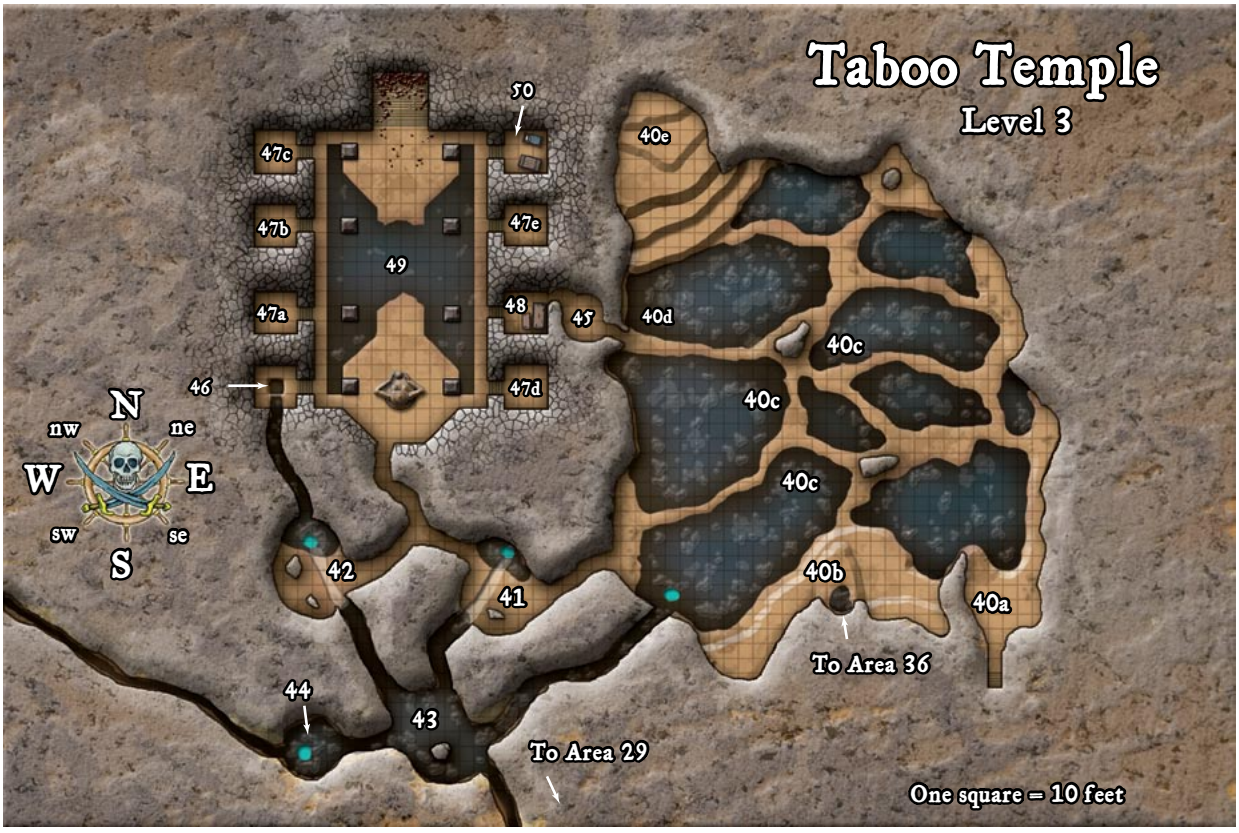

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Khala and Pet

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Chris West

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